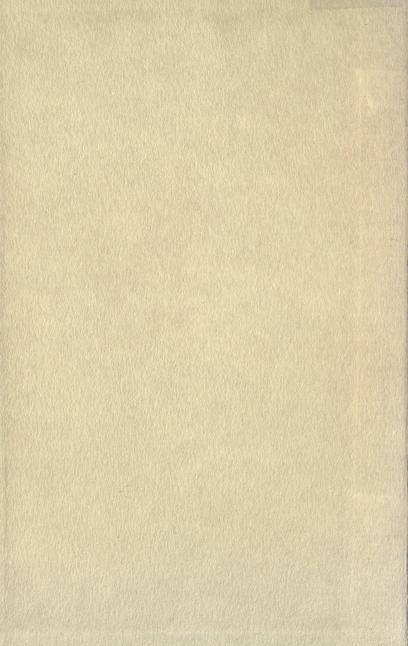


STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

GLADYS DAVIDSON



mildred C. Brock



The Music Lover's Library

STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

THIRD SERIES

The Music Lover's Library.

CHATS ON VIOLINS OLGA RACSTER

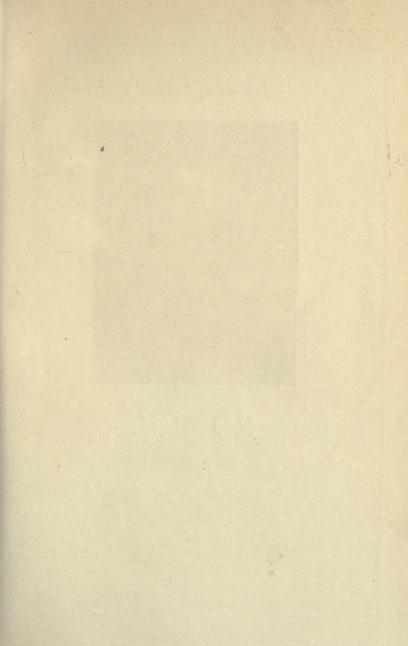
STORIES FROM THE OPERAS
FIRST SERIES
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STORIES FROM THE OPERAS
THIRD SERIES
GLADYS DAVIDSON

CHATS WITH MUSIC LOVERS
DOCTOR ANNIE W. PATTERSON

CHATS ON THE VIOLONCELLO OLGA RACSTER





ROSSINI.

Frontispiece.

STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

WITH SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE COMPOSERS

THIRD SERIES

GLADYS DAVIDSON

Illustrated



26954

T. WERNER LAURIE
CLIFFORD'S INN



DEDICATED BY GRACIOUS PERMISSION

TO

HER HIGHNESS PRINCESS MARIE LOUISE OF SCHLESWIG HOLSTEIN.



PREFACE

Owing to the very kind interest and appreciation expressed by readers of my first and second series of "Stories from the Operas," I have been encouraged to prepare a third volume of these dramatic tales, following out the same plan as before. The Stories now selected are taken from Operas which have met with world-wide popularity and success; and, as in the former volumes, my object has been to present all the incidents of each Libretto in the clear readable form of a short story.

I have to express my sincere thanks to the Managers of the Moody-Manners Opera Company, and Covent Garden Opera House, for their kindness and courtesy in giving me information regarding libretti.



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STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

THE LILY OF KILLARNEY.

ONE summer evening, a gay company of merrymakers were gathered together in the brilliantly lighted hall at Torc Cregan, an ancient Irish mansion beautifully situated in the romantic district of Killarney; for Hardress Cregan, the handsome young owner of the estates, was entertaining his friends with all the generous prodigality and light-hearted carelessness of his race.

The old hall rang with laughter and the sound of boisterous songs; and the merry guests now rejoiced with their host for his bachelor state and freedom from care, and anon rated him for not taking on himself the sweet bonds of matri-

mony.

All were bent on enjoyment and ready for any mad frolic; and when a moonlight steeplechase was suggested in order to try the disputed merits of two of the guests' steeds, it was hailed with zest, and the whole party trooped out into the

open air to watch the sport.

But Mrs. Cregan, the widowed mother of Hardress, remained behind in the deserted hall; and upon a servant, a few moments later, announcing a newcomer, "Mr. Corrigan," her gaiety quickly vanished, and a careworn, hunted look came into her eyes. For Corrigan was an agent, or "middleman," a low-bred, officious fellow who held a mortgage on the Cregan estates; and being ambitious and eager to make a position for himself in Kerry, he did not hesitate to dictate insolent terms to the aristocratic family he thus had in his power. Knowing that the Cregans were considerably embarrassed for money, and feeling that his chance of early payment was small, he had requested Mrs. Cregan to persuade her son to seek marriage with Miss Anne Chute, the richest heiress in Kerry, with whose wealth the matter of the mortgage could be comfortably settled; and it was his practice to intrude occasionally to learn how Hardress' suit was progressing.

To-night, however, he had a new suggestion to make; for being impressed by the still youthful looks and charms of Mrs. Cregan, he had the assurance to remark that, should Hardress not succeed in securing the heiress, he would himself be willing to accept the hand of the handsome widow in lieu of payment. To this suggestion Mrs. Cregan, who loathed and despised the man, gave a proud refusal; but her indignant demeanour was quickly changed to dismay when Corrigan, angered by her scorn, declared that if she intended Hardress to settle the debt by marrying the heiress, she must keep a strict watch upon him, since he had recently discovered that the young man was indulging in a secret amour with an unknown peasant girl, whom he kept hidden in a cottage on the opposite shore of the neighbouring lake.

Mrs. Cregan incredulously repudiated his statement; but her angry speech was interrupted by the sound of a song sung by a lake boatman, whom Corrigan triumphantly declared to be Danny Mann, the devoted, though humble, follower of Hardress, for whom he was evidently now waiting, in order to convey him to his mysterious sweetheart on the opposite shore.

To convince Mrs. Cregan of the truth of his statement, Corrigan drew her behind a curtain, from whence, unseen, she could watch the result of the boatman's signal. A few moments later, Hardress, having made his escape from his friends on hearing the boatman's song, entered the room, and spoke with Danny Mann through

the open window; and then, taking up a lighted candle, he exposed it and shaded it three times, finally extinguishing it altogether, upon which a similar light in a cottage window on the opposite shore of the lake likewise flashed and vanished.

After this unmistakable signal had been made, Hardress hurried down to the water, and was rowed across the lake in Danny Mann's boat; and Mrs. Cregan, now only too well convinced of her son's intrigue, was filled with dismay. But Corrigan left the house in triumph, knowing that the startled widow would now hurry forward her son's suit with the heiress, since her pride of birth would not suffer her to contemplate the young man's present love affair with serenity; and he chuckled as he thought how remorselessly he would insist upon the second mode of paying the debt, should the first one fail.

Meanwhile, in the cottage on the other side of the lake, Eily O'Connor, the Lily of Killarney, a lovely young Irish girl, whose silky raven locks had won for her the name of the Colleen Bawn, eagerly awaited the arrival of Hardress Cregan, who was indeed not only her lover, but her lawful husband also; for Hardress had fallen so passionately in love with this beautiful

peasant maiden that, fearful lest he might lose her through the opposition of his own people, he had persuaded her to enter into a secret marriage with him. He had, however, bound her by a solemn promise not to reveal their true relation to each other, knowing that the thought of his probable union with Miss Anne Chute was the only safe means he had of keeping Corrigan from pressing for immediate settlement of his debt; and Eily, who loved her aristocratic admirer with the whole-hearted devotion of a true and trusting nature, readily consented, and at his bidding kept herself hidden in the little cottage on the shore of the lake. Here she was watched over and guarded by a good priest, known as Father Tom; and here also she was frequently visited by a peasant lover, a smuggleroutlaw named Myles-na-Coppaleen, who, though knowing her to be the wife of Hardress Cregan, still showed his devotion to her by keeping close at hand, in order to serve her should the occasion arise.

To-night, as he was conveying a keg of smuggled whisky to his friend, Father Tom, to whom, as a good Catholic, he always gave a tenth of his possessions, Myles had met with the agent, Corrigan, who, knowing him to be in the confidence of Hardress Cregan, had

endeavoured to draw information from him as to the identity of the mysterious hidden maiden in the lake-shore cottage; but his fair words and promised bribes made little headway with the staunch Myles, whose lively Irish wit made him

more than a match for the prying agent.

When Corrigan had departed, Myles made his way to the Colleen Bawn's cottage, where he found the inmates somewhat upset; for Father Tom, jealous of the good name of the pretty maiden over whom he exercised guardianship, had been pressing Eily to persuade Hardress Cregan to acknowledge their marriage, declaring it to be unjust to her that he should continue to visit her by stealth. Nor was the good father satisfied when Eily declared that Hardress doubtless felt ashamed to introduce a peasant wife to his fine relations, and that he might even leave her altogether should he be pressed to do so; but when he again sternly insisted upon her securing her rights, she agreed to do so.

On the entrance of Myles, however, gaiety once more reigned in the cottage; for the merry outlaw insisted on brewing a big bowl of punch, to the accompaniment of a lively Irish song.

As the song came to an end, Hardress Cregan appeared; and Eily soon noticed that he was anxious and upset, since her strong Irish brogue

irritated him more than usual, so that he scolded her for mispronouncing her words. Presently she learnt from him of the difficulty he was in with regard to the mortgage on his estate; and he eagerly desired her to give up her marriage certificate, that he might be free to make the union his mother desired, declaring that otherwise he would visit her no more.

Eily's love for Hardress was so great that she was even willing to make the monstrous sacrifice he required, in order to save him from ruin; but Myles-na-Coppaleen indignantly interposed to prevent such a selfish design from being carried out, whilst Father Tom sternly compelled Hardress to give into his own keeping the certificate which the trusting Eily had yielded up.

Young Cregan, angry at being thus foiled, and equally ashamed at the base part he had felt compelled to play for the sake of his mother's welfare, left the cottage in a passion, declaring that he would never visit it again, and bidding the Colleen Bawn farewell for ever; and poor Eily, overcome by this distressing scene, fell senseless to the floor, heedless of the words of comfort uttered by her two faithful friends.

Hardress, though soon filled with deep remorse for his recent heartless conduct, now began to pay his addresses to Anne Chute with such earnestness and success that their engagement and early marriage was presently announced; but the young man's thoughts constantly reverted to the deserted Eily, whom he still loved dearly, and whose gentle image he could not drive from his mind.

Soon, his troubled thoughts and embarrassing situation became known to Danny Mann; and the wily boatman, whose devotion and love for young Cregan was intense, suggested a desperate means for securing his freedom. He hinted that he would himself willingly resort to violence in order to remove the Colleen Bawn from his master's path; and even when Hardress refused with horror and indignation to consider such a scheme, he still declared that he was ready to do the deed at any time, if Cregan would send him his glove as a token that he desired Eily O'Connor to vanish.

Shortly after this, Mrs. Cregan received another visit from Corrigan, the agent, who, still doubting whether Hardress would ever marry the heiress, began to press his hateful alternative upon her; but his undesired attempts at love-making were summarily stopped by the entrance of young Cregan, who, grasping the situation at a glance, forcibly ejected the agent, pouring fiery words of indignation upon him, to which Corri-

gan replied with sulky threats of an early triumph.

It happened that Danny Mann, the boatman, who was waiting without, overheard the whole of this conversation; and after cautiously watching Corrigan and Hardress to a safe distance, he came forward to speak with Mrs. Cregan, declaring that the only way to make a break between her son and his sweetheart, the Colleen Bawn, was to pack the girl off to America, slyly undertaking to arrange the matter himself with Eily, who he knew would consent, if he could show to her Hardress' glove as a token that it was his desire she should go.

Mrs. Cregan, unaware that the pair were married, and equally unsuspicious that Danny had any darker scheme in his mind, went at once in search of the required symbol, feeling that if only Eily could be got away from the district, Hardress would think no more about her, and thus his marriage with Anne Chute could be hurried forward; and soon she returned with one of Hardress' gloves, which was joyfully seized by the boatman, who eagerly set about carrying out his base design, by which he intended to force the Colleen Bawn, by threats of murder, to give up her marriage certificate, knowing that if once this could be destroyed,

she had no legal claim on Hardress Cregan, since the priest who had wedded them, and all other

witnesses of the marriage, were dead.

With stealthy haste, Danny Mann got out his boat; and, making his way to the cottage of the Colleen Bawn, he informed her that Hardress had sent him to fetch her away at once. The unsuspicious Eily was filled with joy on hearing this, for she had seen and heard nothing of Hardress since the night he had left her in anger; and she eagerly stepped into Danny Mann's boat, believing that her beloved one had forgiven her, and was about to acknowledge her as his wife. The fact that Danny appeared to have been drinking somewhat heavily did not cause her any alarm for her safety; for it never entered into her trusting heart that the old boatman, who had always loved her, could ever do her harm, much less that he had deliberately bolstered his courage with drink for this very purpose.

Too soon, however, her fears were awakened; for Danny Mann, instead of taking her to the opposite shore as she had expected, hastily rowed her to a dark and lonely water cave, where he roughly bade her step out on a rock. Then he commanded her to either deliver up to him the marriage certificate which he knew she now always carried in her bosom, or be thrown by

him into the lake to drown; and poor Eily, at last full of fear, implored him to have pity upon her, since she had sworn to the priest, Father Tom, that she would never part with her marriage lines.

But Danny Mann was too devoted to Hardress Cregan to be kept from his resolve by even the tearful entreaties of the fair Lily of Killarney; and still believing that he was acting in the real interests of his beloved young master, he fiercely demanded the marriage certificate, and upon Eily again firmly refusing to part with it, he pushed her remorselessly into the water.

At this moment a shot was fired, and Danny Mann, mortally wounded by his unseen assailant, fell also into the water.

The person who had fired this shot was none other than Myles-na-Coppaleen, the Colleen Bawn's peasant lover, who used this solitary water cave as a hiding-place for the kegs of whisky and other contraband goods which he smuggled from time to time; and swinging himself by means of a long rope into his secret domain at the moment of Eily's fall into the water, and seeing a moving form on the rock, he mistook it in the darkness for an otter, took aim, and fired.

He was just chuckling over the excellent shot

he had made, when he noticed something white floating in the water; and soon, to his horror, recognising this as the form of his beloved Eily, he instantly dived in to her rescue. After some little difficulty he reappeared with the now unconscious girl in his arms; and placing her tenderly in his boat, he hastily rowed her away from the cave, and conveyed her to his own cabin.

Here, with great tenderness, he restored her to consciousness once more; but on learning from her that it was Danny Mann who had thrust her into the water, and whom he had himself shot in the cave in mistake for an otter, he suspected foul play, and determined to keep the girl hidden for the present, believing the old boatman to be dead.

But Danny Mann, though mortally wounded, did not die immediately; and after a long and painful effort, he managed to crawl from the cave and reach a place of safety, where aid was forthcoming. He begged his rescuers to send for Father Tom, that he might confess to him before he died; and on the arrival of the priest he told him of the whole plot, and that he had drowned Eily O'Connor in the hope of being of service to Hardress Cregan.

The unaccountable disappearance of the

Colleen Bawn confirmed his story, which quickly spread abroad; and this information coming to the ears of Corrigan, the agent, he at once went before the magistrates, and accused Hardress Cregan with complicity in the crime. An order was accordingly made out for the arrest of Hardress; and Corrigan set off with the officers of justice and soldiers for this purpose, maliciously triumphing in the revenge he could now take upon the Cregans for their contempt of him.

He led his men to the mansion of Anne Chute, where a gay company of guests had already assembled for the wedding festivities, which were even now being held; but even as the soldiers surrounded the house, Hardress Cregan, unable to keep up the deception any longer, drew the heiress away from her guests, and confessed all to her, telling her of his secret marriage with the Colleen Bawn, for whom he now deeply mourned, believing her to be dead.

Anne Chute possessed a gentle and kindly nature; and instead of spurning him, as he had expected, she had only sympathy for his sorrow, and willingly expressed her forgiveness for his conduct to herself.

It was at this moment that Corrigan entered with the officers of justice to arrest the now

despairing young man for his supposed complicity in the murder of Eily O'Connor; and a scene of the wildest consternation followed. Anne Chute and all her guests declared stoutly that Hardress could not be guilty of such a horrible crime; but Corrigan triumphantly produced the glove which Danny Mann had obtained, declaring this to be the token agreed upon between the old boatman and his master that the unfortunate girl should disappear.

Hardress indignantly denied that he had ever sent such a token, declaring that though Danny Mann had indeed made the dark suggestion to him, he had instantly repelled it with horror; and Mrs. Cregan, who had been half-dazed by the shock of her son's danger, now rushed forward, and related how the old boatman had enticed her to give him the glove, thus proving beyond doubt that Hardress was entirely innocent in the matter.

Then, to the utter surprise and relief of all, there came a sudden and welcome interruption to this distressing scene; for Eily O'Connor herself entered the room, accompanied by Myles-na-Coppaleen, who, hearing of the dangerous position of Hardress Cregan, had judged this to be the right moment in which to produce the girl whose life he had saved.

With deep joy and thankfulness, Hardress clasped his beloved Eily in his arms, and introduced her to the astonished company as his lawful wife; and seeing the turn affairs had taken, Corrigan, the agent, slunk quietly out of the room.

Nor had he again the power to annoy or persecute the Cregans; for, with splendid generosity, Anne Chute insisted upon settling the matter of the mortgage as her wedding gift to Hardress and his lovely Colleen Bawn.



LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR.

During the turbulent times of the seventeenth century revolution many of the noble families of Scotland were plunged into poverty and ruin; and under the lax and uncertain rule of changing parties, many occasions arose for unjust oppression by the ambitious holders of powerful offices, and for the pursuit of private feuds and motives of revenge.

Thus it came about that the Barons of Ravenswood, an ancient family who had dwelt for many centuries in the south-east of Scotland amidst the wild hills of Lammermoor, became gradually poor, and lost the power they had enjoyed so long; and the young Lord Edgar, the surviving Master of Ravenswood, found himself forced to struggle against almost overwhelming difficulties.

The young Edgar, enthusiastic and full of spirit, did not grudge the sharing of his country's troubles; but when most of his lands and possessions fell into the hands of the Ashtons, the long hated foes of his race, and a less noble family than his own, his heart was indeed filled with bitterness.

By ingratiating themselves with the most powerful party then in office, the Ashtons had gained considerable influence in the southern provinces; and they did not fail to use their power by taunting and annoying the family of Ravenswood, whose hatred they returned with equal zest.

But whilst Edgar of Ravenswood still managed to dwell securely in his crumbling old castle, though shorn of his wealth, his foes, in their ambitious flights and grasping pride, eventually over-reached themselves; and at last, Sir Henry Ashton, on coming into the estates, found himself faced with ruin. He had become entangled in a Government conspiracy; and suspicion having quickly fallen upon him, he knew himself to to be in the utmost danger.

In this desperate situation, one person alone could save him from the traitor's awful doom—his fair young sister, Lucy. For Lucy Ashton's exquisite beauty and gentle nature had gained her the admiration of Sir Arthur Bucklaw, a gay young nobleman, who held high offices, and whose great influence was sufficient to remove the danger which threatened the involved Henry.

This influence Sir Arthur was willing to exert if Lucy's hand were bestowed on him in

marriage; and as Henry Ashton spoke of this matter one day with his henchman, Norman, and his chaplain, Bide-the-Bent, he anxiously sought to allay his fears thus.

Bide-the-Bent, who had been Lucy's tutor, and loved her dearly, knowing that she had no affection for Sir Arthur, begged his master not to harass the maiden, since she was still too young to think of such matters; but Norman, the henchman, laughed derisively on hearing this, and declared that, so far from being too young to think of love, Lucy already had a devoted lover, to whom she granted secret interviews in the grounds.

Henry, angry at hearing such news, demanded further information; and Norman declared that Lucy, when walking one day in the park, having been rescued from the furious attack of a wild bull by a handsome young stranger, had straightway fallen in love with him, and was now in the habit of meeting him

frequently.

"And what is the name of this bold stranger who thus dares to woo my sister in secret?" cried Henry, pale with wrath; and Norman answered:

"Edgar of Ravenswood!"

On hearing that Lucy's lover was none other than his own hated foe, Ravenswood, Henry Ashton became furious, and passionately vowed vengeance on the pair; and, full of angry, uneasy thoughts, he determined to hasten the alliance of his sister with Sir Arthur Bucklaw, after which he hoped to soon find means for vanquish-

ing the disappointed lover.

Meanwhile, knowing her brother to be engaged with his followers, Lucy, attended by her maid, Alice, had crept down to the secret trysting-place in the park, to await the coming of her lover, whom she expected that day; for the henchman, Norman, had spoken the truth, and a deep love had indeed sprung up between Edgar of Ravenswood and the fair daughter of his enemies. As the young girl and her attendant drew near to an ancient fountain, around which a legend had grown up to the effect that a dead and gone Ravenswood had there slain a maiden who loved him, and that her spirit still haunted the spot, Lucy declared that she had herself recently beheld this wraith, which had made strange signs, as though warning her against some unseen danger; and Alice begged her young mistress to no longer continue her secret love passages, since such a solemn warning evidently meant that trouble was in store for her. But Lucy heeded her not; and seeing Edgar

approach, she ran to greet him with great joy. Soon, however, when the first happy moments were passed, she noticed that her lover was anxious and somewhat preoccupied; and on asking the cause, she was quickly filled with sorrow when Edgar announced that in a few hours he would be compelled to leave the country on a secret mission to France, a mission which had been entrusted to his care by the political party to which he belonged.

The young man also declared that he would now boldly seek an interview with Sir Henry Ashton, in order to secure his consent to their union; but Lucy, fearing her brother's anger, and knowing well that he would never consent to bestow her upon one for whom he bore such intense hatred, begged him to keep their love a precious secret until his return, lest evil should fall upon her during his absence.

Edgar's reply was a passionate tirade against the man who had so ruthlessly persecuted his race, and brought ruin upon him; but quickly melted by the tears and entreaties of the gentle Lucy, he granted her request, and comforted her with great tenderness.

The lovers now exchanged rings, as their solemn pledge of faithfulness to each other; and with many loving embraces, they at length bade

each other farewell, and parted with heavy hearts.

A sad and harassing time was now in store for Lucy; for Sir Henry Ashton, beset on all sides with dangers and difficulties, was determined to save himself from utter disaster by wedding his lovely sister to Sir Arthur Bucklaw, who alone had the necessary influence to extricate him from the compromising political sea of trouble in which he had become immersed.

It was in vain that Lucy refused to agree to the marriage, even summoning courage to declare her plighted troth to Edgar of Ravenswood; her brother absolutely declined to consider her wishes in the matter, and ruthlessly resolved to sacrifice her happiness to his own selfish ends. He therefore made all the arrangements for her marriage with Sir Arthur Bucklaw to be carried out; and he proceeded to invite all their relations and friends to attend the ceremony of signing the marriage contract, and the wedding of the pair.

Lucy, finding herself helpless in the matter, could only hope that her beloved Edgar would return in time to claim her as his plighted bride, and thus free her from her terrible position; but to her sorrow, she received no replies to the letters she sent to her lover, and was soon

plunged in despair. The fact of the matter was that Sir Henry's henchman, Norman, intercepted all the letters sent by the absent Edgar, and took them to his master; and, between them, they also concocted a forged letter, in which the Master of Ravenswood was made to announce that his affection for Lucy had waned, and that he had taken another lady to be his wife.

This letter Henry Ashton kept as his last argument; and on the day on which the bridal guests were expected, he had a final interview with his sister, bidding her to be of more cheerful demeanour, since she must sign her marriage contract with Sir Arthur Bucklaw that day.

Again the unhappy girl begged for mercy, declaring that she could not marry Bucklaw since she had plighted herself to Edgar of Ravenswood, and refusing to heed her brother when he insisted that a vow made without the consent of her guardians was not binding upon her; and then, still finding her obdurate, Sir Henry produced the forged letter and bade her read it.

The hapless Lucy, believing the writing to be that of her lover, whom she was thus compelled to acknowledge as faithless, was now plunged into the deepest grief; and her brother, taking advantage of her dazed and helpless condition, besought her eagerly to turn her thoughts from such an unworthy object, and to sign the contract of the brilliant marriage which had been arranged for her, declaring that he himself would certainly forfeit his life unless she would consent to wed Sir Arthur Bucklaw, who alone had the power to save him, and was willing to do so on this one condition.

Lucy, thus basely deceived, felt that life had no further joy for her; and feeling now that it was her duty to save her brother from ruin, she fell into a state of wretched apathy, and finally consented to the marriage, caring naught for what might befall her.

The wedding guests now arrived; and Lucy, quite dull, and heedless of Sir Arthur Bucklaw's eager greeting, at the whispered stern bidding of her brother, signed the marriage contract with a trembling hand.

No sooner had she done the deed, than a cloaked stranger dashed into the room; and, to the surprise and consternation of all, the intruder proved to be none other than Edgar of Ravenswood himself, who, having just returned from France, had come to claim his plighted bride.

For answer, Henry Ashton triumphantly showed him the signed marriage contract; and Edgar, thus seeing that Lucy had broken her troth, fell into a passion of rage and grief, and, scorning all explanations from the distracted girl, snatched her ring from his finger and returned it to her, passionately demanding his own back again.

Half-dazed with the shock of his sudden appearance, the unhappy Lucy, as in a dream, slowly and almost unwittingly drew the ring from her finger; and Edgar, after passionately trampling the love pledge beneath his foot, rushed from the room, uttering wild curses on the family of Ashton.

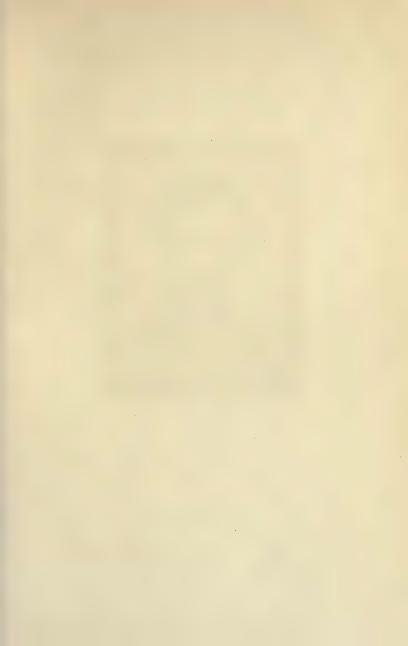
Hurrying to his crumbling and dismantled castle, the unhappy Master of Ravenswood remained plunged in the deepest grief; and here he was some hours later visited by the triumphant Henry Ashton, who came to announce that his sister's marriage with Sir Arthur Bucklaw had duly taken place. Passionate words passed between the two men, who had been implacable foes from childhood; and after proudly agreeing to settle their differences by a duel next morning, Henry Ashton returned to his mansion to join in the wedding festivities.

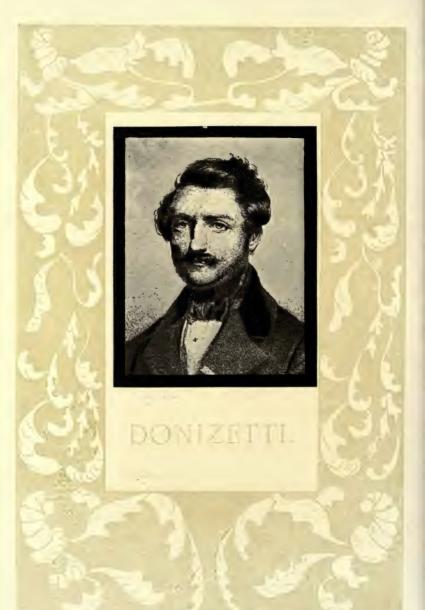
But woe was quickly to succeed to this forced merriment; for, shortly after the bride and bridegroom had been escorted to their chamber, wild shrieks were heard, and the chaplain, Bide-theBent, rushed into the presence of the alarmed guests with a fearful story on his lips. Lucy Ashton, tortured and racked with the anxiety and sorrow of the last few weeks, and utterly stunned and prostrated by the final shock of Edgar's return and passionate reproaches, had lost her reason; and in a paroxysm of frenzy, she had slain her newly-made husband.

Overwhelmed with horror, Henry Ashton and his guests hurried to the scene of this awful tragedy; but though they endeavoured to calm and restore the distraught girl, their efforts were in vain, and Lucy, worn out in body as well as

in mind, died a few hours later.

Bide-the-Bent and some other retainers of the family, quickly brought the sad news to Edgar of Ravenswood, who, unable to rest, was passing the night in wretchedness amidst the tombs of his ancestors in a wild and craggy spot; and when the unhappy lover thus heard of his beloved one's tragic death, and understood that he had wronged her, since she had been cruelly deceived, his woe was so great that, determined not to live without her, he stabbed himself to the heart, and fell dead at the feet of the horrified attendants.





LUCREZIA BORGIA.

ONE summer day, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a splendid fête was being held in the gardens of the Barberigo Palace in Venice; and amongst the gay company of guests thronging the fairylike grounds were many bearers of the proudest and most ancient names in Italy.

One of the chief guests was the brilliant young Duke Orsini, around whom there quickly gathered a group of lively friends, all of whom, with one exception, could boast of noble birth. Nor, strange to say, was this one guest of unknown ancestry despised by his companions; but, on the other hand, he was fêted and admired above all others present. For young Genarro, who knew nothing of his parentage and was not ashamed to reveal the fact that his early years had been spent under the guardianship of an old fisherman, had, on entering the Venetian army, quickly made a name for himself by his remarkable prowess in the recent warfare; and his heroic deeds, coupled with his handsome

looks and charming disposition, had won for him great popularity and many friends, amongst whom even the aristrocratic Orsini was proud to be numbered.

The principal subject of conversation amongst the guests was, as usual, the most recent atrocity committed by some member of the mighty Borgia family, who at that time held the chief power in Italy, and were universally feared and detested for their unscrupulous conduct and deeds of cold-blooded cruelty; and as the Orsini were amongst their most hated enemies, the young Duke did not hesitate to represent them in the worst possible light to his companions.

To-day, he dwelt on the many heartlessly cruel achievements of the Lady Lucrezia Borgia, who, although one of the most lovely and fascinating women of her time, had inherited her family's pride and love of power, and, like her brother Cæsar, did not scruple to use violent means to satisfy her passions or ambitions. A thrust in the dark or a poisoned draught rewarded those who presumed to interfere with the schemes of the powerful Borgias; and their victims were of all ranks, from the lowest to the highest.

The young Genarro, fresh from deeds of honour and chivalry, soon sickened at the recital of deeds of treachery; and being overcome by the excessive heat, he presently stretched himself on the ground in a shady spot near the water, and fell asleep. When he had thus left the group, Orsini, proud of his young friend, began to relate to his companions the stirring story of Genarro's heroic conduct in the recent battle of Rimini; and shortly afterwards, they wandered away to another part of the grounds.

Presently, a gondola glided silently past the festive grounds; and a lady who sat within, noticing the sleeping form of Genarro on the bank near the water's edge, and being greatly struck with his exceeding beauty, landed and

stepped lightly to his side.

This lady was none other than the notorious Lucrezia Borgia herself, who, though come on a secret mission to Venice, did not hesitate to enter boldly into the midst of her enemies, merely for the sake of gratifying an impulse of the moment.

As she silently bent over the handsome sleeping youth, a feeling of great tenderness for him suddenly welled up within Lucrezia's heart, for she now recognised him as her own son, the child born of a secret amour of her first early youth; and trembling with the excitement of her newly-awakened maternal love, and her delight

in the beauty of her offspring, she raised his hand and kissed it softly.

At her salute, the young man awakened, greatly confused at finding himself thus alone with such a dazzling stranger; for Lucrezia was still young and beautiful, and her wonderful fascination was quickly felt by Genarro, who made friends with her at once, and was soon engaged in pleasant conversation with her. He told her his story with all the trusting confidence of early youth; describing to her how he had been left as an infant with the old fisherman who had brought him up, and how, after joining the Venetian army, he had seemed to lead a charmed existence, modestly refraining from dwelling upon his more recent exploits.

So delighted was the youth with the sympathy and kindness of the strange lady, that he begged her to reveal her name to him; but this Lucrezia refused to do, for she did not wish to destroy his evident respect for her by disclosing her identity, nor did she dare to acknowledge her true relationship to him, having kept his birth a secret all these years.

But as she turned to leave him, Orsini and his companions returned to seek for their friend; and instantly recognising the lady, whose face was well known to all of them, they denounced her to Genarro as the detested Lucrezia Borgia, whose hateful deeds they had so recently described to him.

But, though Genarro was shocked at this announcement, he had already so completely fallen under the fascination of Lucrezia that he took every opportunity of seeing her that arose; and his friendship with her was strengthened by frequent meetings.

Their evident affection for each other was ere long noticed by Lucrezia's husband, the Duke Alphonse of Ferrara, in whose breast jealousy was quickly roused to such a pitch that he vowed vengeance upon the pair, and eagerly watched for

an opportunity of satisfying his wrath.

The young Duke Orsini and his companions were also greatly disturbed by their friend's infatuation for one of the hated Borgia family; and they did all in their power, by means of scoldings and taunts, to draw him away from Lucrezia's wiles, knowing only too well that such an intimacy would certainly end disastrously for the young man.

But Genarro, who felt himself attracted by some mighty, invisible force towards the beautiful woman who showed such tender affection for him, although unable to define the feeling he had for her, continued his new intimacy in spite of the warnings of his friends; yet at times their taunts stung him bitterly, for he knew well the evil character which Lucrezia had earned for herself, and he would then despise himself for allowing her to exercise such a strange fascination over him.

On one such occasion as this, having met with his friends in the public square in front of the Borgia Palace at Ferrara, and being taunted by them more bitterly than usual, he gave vent to a passionate outburst of anger against Lucrezia; and, heedless of consequences, he dashed up to the palace door, and recklessly struck off the first letter of her name with the short dagger he wore.

This rash deed was observed by the Duke of Ferrara himself, who at once ordered his attendants to make the young man a prisoner and hold him in the palace. He then caused the defacing of the family name to be made known to Lucrezia, who, unaware that the deed had been committed by Genarro, and only feeling rage at the insult, demanded that the culprit should be seized and put to death; and the Duke, gloating over the chance that had at last put his supposed rival in his power, declared that her wish should be immediately carried out, and ordered the prisoner to be brought into the room for sentence.

Then, when Lucrezia saw that it was her own beloved son whom she had thus so carelessly condemned to death, she was filled with dismay and horror, and at once began to plead with her husband for his life.

But the Duke remained obdurate, and furiously denounced Genarro as her lover, who should now die in her presence; and, in spite of the frantic woman's entreaties and passionate tirades, the most he would grant was that she should choose the mode of his death.

Lucrezia was for the moment filled with despair, not daring to vindicate herself by revealing her true relationship to Genarro; but, suddenly, her quick wit devising a way out of the difficulty, she declared that she was willing for the prisoner to die by drinking a draught of the famous poisoned wine of the Borgias.

The Duke, well pleased that his own strong will should have, as he supposed, conquered the proud spirit of his wife, triumphantly produced a cup of poisoned wine, which he handed to the unfortunate Genarro, compelling him to drain it to the last drop; and then, with a mocking laugh, he left the pair to take a last farewell of each other. But he had forgotten for the moment that the Borgias had the power to cure as well as to kill with the subtle poisons they

used; and when he had departed, Lucrezia hastily produced an antidote to the fatal draught which Genarro had just taken, so that the young man, by swallowing this, was thus saved from an untimely end.

Having seen that the antidote was taking good effect, Lucrezia hurried the still half-dazed Genarro out of the palace through an unfrequented passage; and bidding him betake himself to Venice, she hoped he was safe from further harm.

Being no longer occupied with the engrossing pleasure of her newly-found son's society, and freed from the softening influence which he had exercised over her, Lucrezia became once more involved in her political schemes and personal intrigues; and having vowed vengeance upon the young Duke Orsini and his four companions for their denunciation of her to Genarro, she proceeded to take her revenge upon them at a splendid banquet to be held at the palace of the Princess Negroni, a lady whose entertainments were always attended by the victims she had marked out.

When the night of the banquet arrived, the cunning Borgia managed to poison a flagon of rich wine, which she caused to be served out to the five nobles whose deaths she desired; and

then she concealed herself, to await the consummation of her plan.

As the revels waxed more boisterous, Orsini, exhilarated by the rare wine he had been served with, entertained the company by singing a gay drinking song; and amidst the applause which followed his performance, Lucrezia made her appearance, and, revealing herself to Orsini and his companions, announced with cruel triumph that they had all partaken of poisoned wine and that in a few minutes they would be dead. her command, the attendants showed the five victims the coffins in which they would shortly lie; but at this moment, when her vengeance was just consummated, she was suddenly prostrated with horror. For Genarro, who, neglectful of her bidding, had remained in Ferrara, now suddenly appeared before her; and, announcing that he also, as a guest at the banquet, had partaken of the poisoned wine, sternly desired her to provide a sixth coffin for his remains when he should presently breathe his last.

The revellers, overcome by this tragic interruption to their mirth, left the banqueting hall one by one, with pale faces and trembling steps; and the mother and son were left alone.

Lucrezia was filled with the utmost horror on thus discovering that she had once again caused her beloved son to be poisoned; and quickly producing the antidote, with tears and entreaties she begged him to swallow it instantly, her anxiety at his extreme danger being so great that, unable to control her feelings, she now revealed herself to him as his mother.

But Genarro refused to accept the antidote; for he was stunned by the announcement that this terrible woman, whose cold-blooded murder of his friends repelled him with horror, was his mother. It was in vain that Lucrezia, seeing that the poison was already taking deadly effect upon her gasping son, entreated him passionately to take the antidote which she offered to him, and which alone could save his life; for Genarro was determined not to live since his friends were doomed to die, and, regardless of his mother's despair, he thrust the antidote aside, and a few moments later fell back in her arms, dead.

At this moment, the Duke Alphonso entered the room; and Lucrezia, in a paroxysm of grief and wild despair, revealed to him the true relationship in which she had stood to Genarro.

The Duke had scarcely time to grasp the meaning of her distracted words, when the wretched Lucrezia herself fell gasping to the floor; for the shock of having unwittingly murdered her own son was greater than she had strength to bear, and with a last despairing cry of woe and remorse, she fell dead beside the still form of her beloved Genarro.



THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT.

During the occupation of the Swiss Tyrol by the French, the soldiers of the Eleventh Regiment of the Grand Army of Napoleon had many special opportunities for distinguishing themselves; and, having one day, after a short period of rest, once again received orders to march against the enemy, the news was hailed with joy, and the camp was soon full of the bustle of departure.

But this particular day was destined to bring forth much trouble to the Eleventh Regiment, and to mark an event which caused deep disturbance in their happy camp life; and all this woe arose from their chance meeting with a party of travellers early in the morning.

It happened that a rich lady, the Marchioness of Berkenfeld, was driving through the Tyrol on a return journey to her chateau; and on passing the camp of the Eleventh Regiment, she was filled with dismay when her carriage was suddenly stopped by the soldiers. Her fears, however, were soon set at rest by the Sergeant in charge, an elderly man named Sulpizio, who,

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on learning her name and destination, politely declared that no harm was intended her; and on being invited to rest awhile in the camp, she very gladly alighted from her carriage, and retired to the tent indicated.

As the Marchioness retired, the soldiers raised a loud shout of welcome at the appearance of a pretty young girl, dressed in the garments of a vivandière, whom they all greeted eagerly as their beloved Marie, the Daughter of the Regiment; and as the maiden tripped merrily amidst the men, Sulpizio sighed deeply, for the unexpected coming of the Marchioness of Berkenfeld now reminded him of a certain duty in connection with this fair child.

The story of Marie's life was a strange one. When quite an infant, she had been discovered by Sergeant Sulpizio on the battlefield; and since no one came to lay claim to her, the Regiment had unanimously decided that she should be adopted by them, and brought up in their camp. She was given the name of Marie; and as the years went on, she quickly won the hearts of all by her winning ways, so that she was tenderly cherished by her numerous adopted fathers, and entitled by them the Daughter of the Regiment.

Marie had a loving and loyal heart, and

returned the affection lavished on her with interest; and as she grew up to womanhood, she determined to repay her friends' kindness by serving them in the capacity of a vivandière. Nor was there ever a merrier or more light-hearted maiden than Marie, the vivandière, and she was toasted everywhere as the truest comrade, the gentlest nurse, and the tenderest of comforters in time of woe.

When Marie had been first discovered on the battlefield by Sulpizio, he found pinned to her clothing a letter, evidently written by her father, and addressed to the Marchioness of Berkenfeld; but not having the means of delivering this letter at that time, the Sergeant had carefully hidden it away amongst his own possessions. Now, however, as this same Marchioness had at last so strangely and unexpectedly come into his life, he felt it to be his duty to give the document into her hands.

As this thought began to trouble him, he glanced tenderly towards the pretty Marie; and noticing that she looked somewhat sad, and remembering that she had appeared less lively of late, he questioned her as to the reason. Marie, who loved Sulpizio with the most filial affection, soon made a full confession to him; and the Sergeant was astonished to learn that she had not

only fallen in love, as he had rather suspected, but that the object of her affection was one whom she ought to have regarded as an enemy.

The girl related that one day quite recently she had been saved from a great danger by a young Swiss named Tonio, to whom she had very quickly lost her heart; and that her love was as ardently returned was proved by the fact that this young man had followed the Eleventh Regiment in all its movements ever since, in spite of the risk he thus ran by haunting the neighbourhood of his country's enemies.

Even as the fair vivandière spoke, there came the sound of a commotion, and a party of soldiers dragged into the camp a young man, whom they had just captured and apprehended as a spy; and, to her surprise and joy, Marie recognised in the prisoner her beloved Tonio.

To the astonishment of all she ran to embrace him; and when she had presently related the story of the service he had rendered her a short time ago, the men released him and welcomed him as a friend.

Tonio now boldly declared his love for Marie, and asked her hand in marriage; and when the elders of the Regiment saw that their beloved Daughter's happiness was bound up in this youth, they gave their consent, declaring, however, that Tonio must join their ranks and serve Napoleon in future. Tonio willingly agreed to this condition, and thus became a soldier of the Grand Army; but he was not yet destined to enjoy the happiness he thought he had secured.

As he entered into sweet converse with his beloved sweetheart, the Marchioness of Berkenfeld came out from the tent where she had been resting; and Sulpizio, unable to stifle the calls of his conscience, now entered into a conversation with her on the subject of Marie, and handed to her the letter which he had found pinned on the child's clothing.

When the Marchioness had read this letter, she became much agitated; and hurrying forward, she clasped Marie in her arms, declaring that the document proved the vivandière to be her own lost niece, and the daughter of her sister, who had contracted a secret marriage with a young

French captain.

As the soldiers listened to this declaration with dismay, the Marchioness next calmly announced that Marie must now return with her to her chateau, that she might be properly educated to fill the high position to which she was entitled by her birth; and though the poor girl, horrified at the thought of leaving her beloved friends, entreated to be left with them, declaring that she

had no desire to be a fine lady, her new relation was adamant in her resolve to remove her niece from such surroundings.

The elders of the Eleventh Regiment were also compelled to admit that they had no right to keep the weeping girl from her own family; and, though they were heart-broken at being thus compelled to part with their darling, they gently persuaded her that she must leave them.

The Marchioness, afraid that opposition might arise with delay, declared it was necessary for her to continue her journey at once, and that she must certainly take her niece with her; and at last, Marie, on the advice of her friends, agreed to go. So the weeping vivandière took a tender farewell of her lifelong friends, and kissed them all for the last time. When she came to Tonio, she embraced him passionately, declaring that in spite of her altered position, she should always remain faithful to him; and as the sorrowful young man watched his sweetheart drive away with her aristocratic relation, he vowed that he would do great deeds, and win for himself such an honourable name and position that he might be worthy to claim her yet.

On reaching the Chateau Berkenfeld, the Marchioness engaged masters and teachers to instruct her niece in dancing, music, foreign languages, and all the accomplishments she considered necessary for the education of a young lady of high rank; and Marie, though finding such a life very cramping and irksome after the unrestrained freedom of the camp, endeavoured to please her aunt to the best of her ability.

But the girl's heart was with her military friends; and every now and again she would break out into enthusiastic reminiscences of her childhood, and indulge in snatches of the merry regimental songs, to the horrified dismay of the decorous Marchioness, who was much shocked at

such unladylike proceedings.

At the end of a year, Marie was declared by her masters to be vastly improved in her social demeanour; and the Marchioness, eager to establish her niece more firmly in her aristocratic circle, now arranged a marriage for her with the son of a Duchess. However, Marie could not forget her soldier sweetheart, Tonio, whom she still loved as dearly as ever; but in spite of her declarations that she could never wed with another, the Marchioness still continued her negotiations with the ducal suitor, and even arranged the day on which the marriage contract was to be signed.

It was about this time that Sergeant Sulpizio

was wounded in an engagement not many miles distant from the Chateau Berkenfeld, and was sent to the Marchioness to crave her hospitality for a while until he should be better. The Marchioness received the Sergeant with much kindness, bestowing the utmost attention upon him; and when he had recovered somewhat from his wounds, she even permitted him free intercourse with Marie, and told him of her plans with regard to the grand marriage she had arranged for her.

Sulpizio at first could scarcely recognise the merry little Daughter of the Regiment in the richly-gowned and elegant young lady whom he was now bidden by his hostess to admire; but when Marie, forgetful of her recent lessons in deportment, rushed enthusiastically into his arms, and hugged him with the most unmistakable joy, he knew that her faithful heart had not

changed amidst her new surroundings.

The Marchioness was eager to show off her niece's accomplishments to the Sergeant, and desired her to sing to him a sentimental French ballad she had just received from Paris; but she was greatly scandalised when Marie, half-way through the ballad, suddenly broke out into the old rollicking regimental song she had always loved so well, and roguishly went through a

number of military evolutions as accompaniment.

But though Marie was cheered for a while by the arrival of the Sergeant, she soon grew unhappy again; for she could not prevent her aunt from carrying out the scheme of the grand marriage.

At last the day arrived upon which the marriage contract was to be signed; and Marie went out into the grounds of the chateau early in the morning with despair in her heart, feeling that she would certainly be forced to carry out her aunt's wish. However, as she stood there with the sympathetic Sulpizio, she suddenly heard the sound of distant drums and fifes; and as the merry "rataplan" drew nearer, she recognised with joy that it was the marching tune of her brave soldier friends.

It was indeed the Eleventh Regiment on their way from the war; and as they had to pass the Chateau Berkenfeld, they made a halt there in order to greet their adopted Daughter.

Marie was delighted at this happy meeting with her old comrades; but her crowning joy was the moment when she was clasped in the strong arms of her beloved Tonio, who was now the commanding officer of the Regiment, having been thus rapidly promoted for his gallantry on the battlefield.

Tonio soon boldly announced that his military rank now rendered him a fit suitor for Marie; and he at once asked her hand in marriage of the Marchioness, a request in which he was loyally supported by the whole Regiment, who were eager that their darling should wed the man she loved, and not be forced into a marriage she detested.

But the Marchioness haughtily refused to give her consent, being bent upon her niece wedding into an aristocratic family; and since the notary had already arrived (although the prospective bridegroom had been detained at Court), she declared that Marie must sign the marriage contract without further delay.

On hearing this cruel resolve Tonio stoutly declared that, contract or no contract, he should certainly carry off his sweetheart by force; and then the Marchioness, in order to avoid such a scandal, revealed to Marie that she was not merely her niece, but actually her own daughter, the child of a marriage she had contracted with a poor Savoyard Captain, at whose death she had concealed the whole affair, lest the knowledge of such a mésalliance should injure her in the good graces of her aristocratic relatives.

She therefore now claimed parental authority over her daughter; and Marie, feeling that she could not refuse to obey her own mother, consented to sign the marriage contract, declaring, however, that it would break her heart to part from her beloved Tonio.

The gentle submission of the despairing girl, however, at last overcame the hard resolve of her mother; and the sight of Marie's deep affection for her humbly-born lover brought back to the proud Marchioness the remembrance of happy days when she herself had loved. With tear-dimmed eyes and softened heart, she now called the lovers to her side; anl placing Marie's hand in that of Tonio, she gave her consent to their union.

The contract with the son of the Duchess was thus promptly broken off; and whilst Marie and her lover rejoiced together, the delighted soldiers raised mighty cheers for the happiness of their beloved Daughter of the Regiment.



THE MASKED BALL.

In the city of Boston, Massachusetts, during the early colonial period, disturbances were constantly occurring between the two contending parties of Royalists and Puritans; and at a reception held one evening at the palace of the Governor, Richard, Earl of Warwick, a party of conspirators had mingled amongst the guests, in order to gather information as to the forthcoming movements of the Viceroy, against whose life they were plotting.

Amongst these conspirators were two negroes named Sam and Tom, who were the ringleaders in the affair; but though they and their friends regarded Richard as a tyrant, and hated him as such, they found that he was very strongly guarded by a large majority of devoted adherents, and that their chances of making an attack upon him were small.

The Earl's chief supporter and most trusted official was his own private secretary, a Creole named Renato, who served his leader with a whole-hearted devotion, loving him as his dearest and most honoured friend; but, though

Richard returned his Secretary's affection, and was sincerely grateful for his devotion, he had avoided him of late, and had seemed to shrink

from their customary intercourse.

The reason for this was the fact that Richard had unfortunately conceived a deep and overmastering passion for Renato's beautiful young wife, Adelia; and though torn with remorse for the wrong he thus did to his friend, he yet could not conquer the love that had grown up in his heart. In spite of the fact that he had refrained from declaring his passion, he had not succeeded in hiding it from the fair Adelia, who soon as ardently returned it, although she also felt deep remorse at the circumstance; and the unfortunate pair were thus wretchedly situated at the time of the Puritan conspiracy.

On the night of the reception, Richard was too much occupied by his tender thoughts of Adelia to notice that many of his avowed foes were actually present in his own house; and in spite of the whispered warnings of the devoted Renato, he continued to regard the strained political position as exaggerated, and merely scoffed at the idea of serious trouble.

During the meeting, a petition was presented to the Governor for the transporting of an old negress named Ulrica, who was reported to be

a sorceress and dealer in the black art; and, utterly regardless of his own personal danger, Richard laughingly declared that before the witch was driven away he would himself consult her on the morrow under a disguise, and urge her to predict the fate in store for him.

The negro conspirators overheard this arrangement; and, hurrying away, they proceeded to gather their party together to plan the assassination of the Governor at the abode of the sorceress, since he would probably be unattended.

In spite of Renato's eager entreaty for him to abandon such a mad scheme of playing into the hands of his enemies, Richard still determined to carry it out; and on the morrow, in the disguise of a sailor, attended only by his faithful page, Edgar, and a few followers, he proceeded to the hut of Ulrica.

Here, surrounded by the usual weird appurtenances of a dealer in magic and sorcery, he found the old hag, who was already granting audiences to certain superstitious folk who had come to have their fortunes told.

As the disguised Earl hung back awhile in the gloom of the smoky hut, he observed a veiled lady approach the so-called witch, and ask in a low tone for a potion to cure a guilty love; and to his surprise he recognised the soft voice as that of his beloved Adelia, and was filled with joy to thus learn for certain that she returned his passion, even though she sought a remedy to destroy it. In reply the hag bade her cull at midnight a certain herb, which grew only in a desolate spot outside the city, where murderers were hanged; and as Adelia hurried away, after declaring her intention to seek the herb that very night, her listening lover vowed in his heart that he would follow her thither, in order to protect her from harm.

It was now Richard's turn to have his fortune told; and to the alarm of his attendants, Ulrica, with dramatic intensity, declared that he would shortly meet his death by violence, and that the fatal blow would be struck by the person who should next take his hand. Laughing at the prediction, Richard held out his hand to his friends in turn, who, however, all drew back superstitiously; but when Renato presently appeared on the scene, in order to draw his master away before his disguise should be penetrated by his enemies, the Earl deliberately seized his hand in defiance of the witch's words, well knowing that his Secretary was devoted to him.

Late that evening, as midnight approached,

Adelia, in fear and trembling, yet firmly resolved in her purpose, made her way with hurried steps to the murderers' gibbet outside the city boundary; and in this wild and lonely spot, which was shunned by all as haunted, she sought the magic herb with which she hoped to quench a love she knew to be disloyal to her husband; and here she was closely followed by Richard, who, as she suddenly uttered an exclamation of terror at the sound of his footsteps, hurried to her side and revealed himself to her. Then, as the moonlight showed him the relief and joy in her face at his greeting, he could no longer retain control of his long-repressed feelings, and, folding her passionately in his arms, he declared his love for her; and Adelia, though still announcing her resolve to banish him from her heart, could not but admit that she returned his love.

This brief moment of supreme happiness was soon rudely interrupted; for angry shouts and approaching flashing lights showed that some disturbance was afoot. The terrified Adelia just had time to drop a heavy veil over her face, when her husband, Renato, dashed up to Richard, and eagerly besought him to return with all haste to the palace, declaring that the negro conspirators, Tom and Sam, had tracked

him to this spot, and were now approaching quickly with a party of adherents to assassinate him.

At first Richard flatly refused to make his escape, fearing for the fate of the hapless Adelia; but upon Renato promising to escort the lady back to the city, he agreed to fly from the certain danger that threatened him, binding his friend, however, to a solemn promise not to attempt to penetrate the secret of his charge's identity.

Renato, not having the slightest suspicion as to who the veiled lady might be, and anxious only for his revered chief's safety, gave the required promise; whereupon Richard dashed away into the darkness, and reached the palace in safety.

When he had gone Renato took the trembling Adelia by the hand, and hurried her away also; but the pair were quickly spied by the approaching conspirators, who rushed forward to capture them with cries of triumph, believing that they had secured the prize they sought. When, however, they discovered that instead of the tyrant Governor it was Renato they had seized, they were filled with angry disappointment; and upon their indulging in coarse jests and taunts at the expense of the veiled lady, the Secretary,

eager to defend his master's sweetheart, drew his sword and furiously defied the howling mob.

At this, Adelia, afraid for her husband's life, hurried to his side, entreating him not to anger the people; and, in her agitation, her veil became disarranged, so that her identity was revealed to all.

When Renato thus saw that it was his own beloved wife he had surprised in the company of the Governor, whom he consequently supposed to be her accepted lover, he was almost stunned with the shock of the discovery; and in his rage and despairing grief, he could scarcely refrain from killing Adelia, as she now fell on her knees before him. However, her piteous entreaties to be at least permitted to bid farewell to her little child, and her passionate declaration of innocence, restrained him for the moment; and sternly bidding her return home with him, he resolved to take vengeance upon the Governor, for whom the love and devotion he had borne was now turned to hate.

With this purpose in view, he quickly pacified the angry conspirators by declaring that he intended to join their ranks; and during the succeeding days he held secret interviews with them, in order to arrange a successful opportunity for the assassination of the Governor. Meanwhile, Adelia was plunged in the deepest despair, fearing that her husband's jealous anger would lead him to some desperate deed; and full of anxiety for the safety of the man she loved, she endeavoured to learn all she could of the plot which she guessed was being hatched against his life.

One day, on suddenly entering a room in which Renato was consulting with the negroes, Sam and Tom, she was coldly commanded by her husband to draw one piece of folded paper from three which had been placed in a vase; for the three conspirators, having now arranged to assassinate the Governor at a splendid masked ball he was to give in a day or two, had determined to draw lots as to who should deliver the fatal blow.

Adelia, fearing to disobey her husband's command, drew forth a paper from the vase; and, horrified by Renato's exultant tone as he announced that it bore his name, she hurried away to her chamber, full of terrifying thoughts. She now felt assured that her husband intended to kill Richard; and suspecting that he hoped to accomplish his fell purpose on the night of the masked ball, she determined, though in no mood for festivity, to attend the function, in order that she might seek an opportunity to warn her lover.

In spite of the deep passion he had conceived for Adelia, Richard had never intended that his love should injure her in any way, and after a mighty struggle with himself, he had determined that they should be parted from each other; and to this end he made arrangements for the appointment of Renato to a high official position in England. He therefore caused the necessary document making the appointment to be duly drawn up; and on the night of the masked ball he carried it with him, intending to hand it to Renato during the evening.

His friends, knowing that the conspirators had been actively engaged of late, endeavoured to persuade him not to attend the ball; but Richard, ever careless of danger, laughed at their fears as usual, and donning a black domino and mask, boldly mingled with the merry dancers.

Renato, attired in the conspirators' chosen colours of azure and scarlet, also mingled with the dazzling throng, seeking for the Governor; but not knowing his disguise, he was getting impatient of the delay in his plans, when he happened to meet the giddy young page, Edgar, from whom he gained the information he sought.

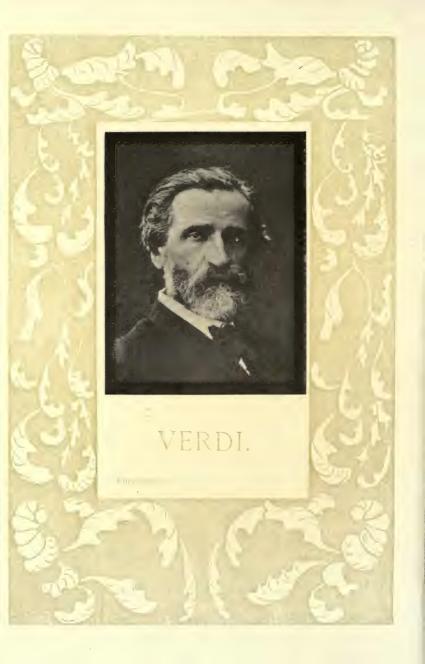
Meanwhile, Adelia, masked and enveloped in a white domino, also sought for Richard; and at last, to her joy, she heard his voice, and recognised him, in spite of his mask and black domino. Quickly making herself known to him, she eagerly besought her lover to leave the ball-room at once, declaring to him her suspicions of the danger that threatened him; but Richard, still careless of his own safety, would not hurry away, but, instead, proceeded to tell her of the plans he had made for their safety from temptation by the appointment in England he had arranged for her husband. He then took a tender farewell of her, resolving not to see her again; but even as he still held her by the hand, Renato, having at last tracked him, dashed forward in a passion of jealousy, and stabbed him to the heart.

As Richard fell back dying, he painfully drew forth the document making the new appointment, and held it towards Renato; and then, as the horrified guests gathered round, with his last gasping breath he declared that Adelia was entirely innocent and pure, and that in his love for her he had never designed her hurt nor aimed at her peace.

With these words he expired; and Renato, now filled with agonising remorse, realised too late that in his jealous frenzy he had slain a man who, so far from being base, had faithfully respected the honour of his friend under a ter-

rible temptation.





OTHELLO.

A HANDSOME Moor, named Othello, a man of noble nature and high intellect, had risen by his own ability and prowess to the envied position of a general in the Venetian Army; and because of his honourable reputation and excellent skill in relating stories of the battles and adventures he had engaged in, he was a welcome guest in many of the great houses of Venice.

But Othello himself cared only to visit at the house of a certain Venetian gentleman named Brabantio, who had a fair daughter named Desdemona; for the beauty, gentleness, and virtue of this lady had completely enslaved the heart of the handsome Moor, who grew to love her with all the strength of his passionate nature. And as the fair Desdemona listened to the glowing tales of peril, adventure, and victory related by the dusky visitor, she hung upon his words with eager interest, weeping for his woes and rejoicing at his escapes; and at last she grew to love him so dearly that all her thoughts became bound up in him.

Othello knew that Brabantio would be horrified at the mere thought of giving his daughter to a Moor; and so he very easily persuaded Desdemona to enter into a secret marriage with him.

Brabantio was filled with great indignation when he was afterwards told of their union; and, accusing Othello of having resorted to magic spells in winning the affections of the maiden, he took the whole matter before the Duke of Venice; but when the royal judge had listened to Othello's simple tale of love, and Desdemona's sweet declaration of trust in her husband, he announced that their mutual affection had come about in a perfectly natural way, and that no magic had been used.

So Brabantio was obliged to give his daughter to her lawful husband; and almost immediately after the case had been settled, Othello, as leader of the Venetian Army, was sent on a military expedition to the island of Cyprus.

The Moor departed first, leaving Desdemona to follow in the care of his lieutenant, Cassio; and upon their arrival in Cyprus great rejoicings

were held.

Now, Othello had another confidential officer, whose name was Iago, and who served him as his Ancient; and this Iago, who was of an envious, cruel, and bitter nature, had a grudge against Cassio, because the latter had been made lieutenant, a post he coveted himself. He also envied the happiness of Othello; for he himself had cherished a passion for Desdemona, and had been filled with bitterness at her preference for the noble Moor. He therefore determined to bring Cassio quickly out of favour with his master, so that he himself might be advanced; and with this object he devised the cunning and cruel plan of making Othello believe that Cassio was the lover of Desdemona, and thus, by bringing misery on all, to satisfy his vengeful and envious nature.

He first of all led the unsuspecting Cassio into the folly of drinking too deeply one night when on guard in the camp; and then, as squabbling arose in consequence of this, he brought Othello upon the scene to learn the cause of the disturbance.

The Moor was so displeased with the foolish conduct of Cassio that he would not permit him to be his lieutenant any longer; but the cunning Iago was not yet satisfied, and he determined to use the disgraced officer still further, in order to bring woe upon Othello himself, whose happiness in the possession of the lovely Desdemona he was so eager to destroy.

He therefore now pretended to be Cassio's friend, and advised him earnestly to ingratiate himself with the Lady Desdemona, who might be induced to intercede with her husband on behalf of the erring officer; and as Iago's own wife, Emilia, was chief lady-in-waiting to Desdemona, it was quite easy for the necessary interviews to be arranged.

The gentle Desdemona, with never a thought of evil, received Cassio very kindly, and promised to plead for him with her husband,

saying:

If I do vow a friendship I'll perform it To the last article . . .

Therefore, be merry, Cassio, For thy solicitor shall rather die Than give thy cause away!

Unfortunately, just as Cassio bent to kiss the lady's hand in gratitude as he departed, Othello himself appeared, accompanied by Iago, who cunningly drew his attention to this little scene.

The first faint shadow of jealousy thus crept into the mind of Othello; and when Desdemona presently began to plead for Cassio, although he answered her with fair words, he had already begun to doubt her in his heart.

After Desdemona had retired, Iago ruthlessly continued his wicked scheme of sowing the seeds

of doubt in Othello's passionate heart; and the Moor quickly began to suffer the sharp pangs of jealousy, and to cherish a secret wrath against his innocent wife.

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, Is the immediate jewel of their souls: Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;

'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;

But he that filches from me my good name, Robs me of that which not enriches him, And makes me poor indeed!

said Iago, in a careless tone; and with such enigmatical, subtle words did he set the poison of doubt to work in his master's mind.

Encouraged by the quick success of his villany, Iago now bade his wife Emilia to procure for him a certain richly worked handkerchief belonging to Desdemona, which had been Othello's first gift to her during their courtship; and Emilia, having no suspicion of treachery, but humbly obedient to her husband's wishes, secured the pretty trifle for him without the knowledge of her mistress. Iago then found an opportunity to make Othello believe that he had discovered this handkerchief amongst the belongings of Cassio, and that it had been given to the ex-lieutenant by Desdemona; and he also

added casually that he had often heard Cassio murmur the name of Desdemona with loving emphasis in his sleep.

This announcement filled Othello with such rage that he rushed furiously at Iago, and flung him to the ground; and when next he met Desdemona he broke out into such a stormy tirade that the gentle lady was terrified.

As the days went on the poison of jealousy so artfully administered by the ruthless Iago began to permeate the whole being of the unfortunate Moor to such an extent that he put an evil construction upon the most innocent remarks of Desdemona; and the bewildered wife became very unhappy as she noted the altered behaviour of her husband, being quite unable to account for such a change, since her love for him was as deep and true as ever.

One day there came ambassadors from Venice with letters on state matters for Othello, in which he was bidden to return home; and upon the messengers asking for the absent Cassio, who was to be deputed to the Moor's place, Desdemona replied that the lieutenant had been disgraced, but that she was constantly pleading for his restoration to favour, since she had much regard for him. On hearing these words, spoken in all innocence and kindly feeling for one in

trouble, Othello's mad jealousy was roused again; and in a wild outburst of rage he struck Desdemona a rough blow, and then fell to the ground in a convulsive fit brought on by his deep emotion.

That night, as Desdemona retired to rest, she was filled with sad thoughts and strange fore-bodings of ill; and as Emilia helped her to disrobe, she sang a low, plaintive song, which she declared had been sung to her mother on her death-bed, and which had haunted the unhappy lady all day. These were the words of the song:

The poor soul sat singing by a sycamore tree, Sing all a green willow;

Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee, Sing willow, willow; willow:

The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans.

Sing willow, willow; willow:

Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones; Sing willow, willow!

When this sad ditty came to an end, Emilia left her mistress in bed; and the troubled Desdemona at length fell asleep.

Presently Othello entered the chamber with his sword in his hand, intending to kill her; but she looked so fair and tranquil as she slept that he could not bear to shed her blood, though he did not mean to go back from his resolve. He still loved her tenderly, in spite of the overmastering jealousy which had eaten into his heart, and his firm belief that she had permitted Cassio to be her lover; and bending over the bed he kissed her sweet lips passionately, murmuring softly:

O balmy breath, that doth almost persuade Justice to break her sword!—one more, one more— Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee, And love thee after:—One more, and that's the last:

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep, But they are cruel tears: This sorrow's heavenly; It strikes where it doth love!

The hot kisses of Othello awakened Desdemona, who was much startled at finding her husband bending over her with such a fierce look in his passionate eyes; nor was she reassured when Othello asked sternly:

Have you prayed to-night, Desdemona?

The poor lady assured him that she had offered up her prayers as usual, and asked him the meaning of such a strange question; and then Othello declared that it was his resolve to kill her, again fiercely denouncing her as untrue to her wifely vows.

It was in vain that the hapless Desdemona

protested her innocence, and pleaded piteously for mercy; so firmly was Othello convinced of her perfidy, owing to the false insinuations of Iago, that nothing could now make him believe in her innocence, and in a paroxysm of jealous passion he seized the pillows and bed-coverings and pressed them over his victim until she was stifled.

Just then Emilia's voice was heard calling loudly for admission; and thinking she had come to bring news of Cassio, whose death he had already ordered, Othello opened the door and let her into the room. But Emilia reported that Cassio was not dead, though wounded; and as she related this news the weak voice of the expiring Desdemona murmured softly, "A guiltless death I die!"

Emilia hurried to the bedside, just as her beloved mistress breathed her last; and filled with horror as she thus understood that Othello had slain his fair wife, she uttered loud cries of grief and alarm, so that a number of attendants hurried into the room, amongst them Iago and the Venetian Ambassadors.

Othello defended his conduct by relating the false tales of Desdemona which he had heard from Iago, more particularly dwelling upon the incident of the embroidered handkerchief; but

when Emilia heard this, her husband's treachery dawned upon her for the first time, and she declared stoutly that she herself had procured the handkerchief for Iago at his own command.

It was in vain that Iago endeavoured to prevent his wife from telling what she knew about this incident, and from proclaiming Desdemona's innocence, which was now plain to all; and finding that she would not be silenced, and that her accusing words had brought his villany to light, he rushed upon her in fury, and stabbed her to the heart.

The Ambassador immediately ordered his arrest; and then, turning to Othello, who was now filled with agonising remorse and despair on learning that he had slain his beloved wife without cause, since she had been innocent after all, he said:

O thou Othello, that was once so good, What shall be said to thee?

And Othello replied humbly and sorrowfully:

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak
Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one, whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,
Richer than all his tribe; of one, whose subdued
eyes,

Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum: Set you down this:
And say besides—that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him—thus!

With these words the unhappy Moor seized his sword, and stabbed himself to the heart; then, as the attendants sprang forward in horror, he fell back dead beside the corpse of his beloved Desdemona.



ERNANI.

In the wild mountainous districts of Arragon, in the year 1519, a large company of bandits and mountaineer rebels were gathered together one day in their stronghold; for they had been summoned thither at the command of their chief, who, though in reality a noble fallen under the ban of the King of Castile, was known to them only by the name of Ernani.

These lawless folk gave their leader unquestioning obedience and loyal service; for Ernani had won their fierce hearts, not only by his noble and commanding presence, but by his just dealings, his faithful heart, and his unimpeachable honour. Never had the bandits known their chief to break his word, to betray a friend, or to deceive even an enemy; and it was with eager sympathy that they now listened to his appeal for their help.

Ernani told them that he had conceived a passion for a certain beautiful lady of Arragon, whose name was Elvira, and who returned his love, since they had already met on several occasions; but, unhappily for the lovers, Elvira had

been betrothed against her will to Don Silva, a Grandee of Spain, who, though advancing in years, was so eager to be united to her that he had already found means to convey her to his castle, where the nuptials were to be celebrated next day. The bandit chief implored the help of his friends to rescue this fair lady from her unhappy position, and to assist him to carry her off from the castle; and the merry rebels gladly agreed to do so.

Having thus made his arrangements with his followers, Ernani betook himself to the castle of Don Silva, where he managed to effect an entrance unobserved; and then concealing himself in an alcove near the apartments of Elvira, he awaited a suitable moment for revealing him-

self to her.

The captive Elvira was in a most unhappy state of mind; for though her bandit lover had assured her that he would rescue her from her fate, she feared lest he should come too late.

As the day wore on, Don Silva was called away for a time; and, during his absence, Elvira was surprised and dismayed by an unexpected visit from the young King Carlos of Spain, who, though she knew him to have professed admiration for her, she had hoped would be too much engaged with the conspiracies and difficulties

arising upon his recent accession to the throne to find time to press his attentions further.

The young King, however, could not quell his youthful passion so easily; and, knowing that Elvira was at the castle of Don Silva, he had made this surprise visit in order to declare his love for her, and even to invite her to share his throne.

But Elvira's heart was already given to Ernani, and she begged the King not to press his suit further, since she could not love him; and this reply enraged Carlos, who had heard of her preference for the bandit chief, so that he seized her by the hand, and would have compelled her to follow him, had not her cry for help quickly brought forth Ernani from his alcove.

An angry altercation now took place between the rivals; but as they were about to engage with their swords, Elvira flung herself between the pair and besought them to desist.

At this moment Don Silva returned, and was filled with grief and indignation at thus finding his betrothed speaking with two lovers in her apartment; and, calling for his weapons, he furiously challenged both the intruders, vowing vengeance for the insult.

The royal attendants, however, now arrived

on the scene; and when Don Silva thus discovered that it was his King whom he had challenged and addressed so cavalierly, he was filled with dismay, and knelt for pardon. Carlos, who was at that time eager for the support of his chief nobles, could not well refuse; but, as he departed, he warned Ernani to fly from his wrath, since it was his intention to exterminate the bandit hordes of which he was the chief.

Elvira now begged her lover to escape whilst he could, assuring him that she would remain faithful to their love until he could return and claim her as his own; and since Ernani's honour would not permit him to desert his bandit friends in their hour of peril, he was thus compelled to leave her, though with many misgivings.

The rebels and bandits, however, met with no success, for the King pursued them with pitiless zeal, and did not rest until he had dispersed the band; and presently a report of Ernani's death was brought to Elvira, who was filled with despair at the news. In spite of her grief, however, she was compelled to listen to the suit of Don Silva once more; and upon the old nobleman now insisting upon her fulfilling her betrothal with him, she was thus forced to consent, being too much dazed and overcome with grief for the loss of her lover to resist.

All arrangements for the celebration of the nuptials were accordingly made; and on the day of the wedding splendid festivities were held at Don Silva's castle.

But Ernani was not dead, though he had been for some time a fugitive; and having at last made his way back to the neighbourhood of his beloved Elvira, and hearing of revels to be held at the castle, though he knew not the cause, he disguised himself as a poor pilgrim, and asked for admittance and hospitality.

Don Silva, who took a pride in his hospitality to high and low alike, gave the pilgrim welcome, treating him as an honoured guest; and inviting him to join in the festivities, he informed him that they were in honour of his own marriage, which was about to be celebrated. At this moment the bridal party entered the hall, accompanied by a gorgeous train of pages, high-born ladies, and Grandees of Spain; and, to his utter woe, Ernani saw that the bride was none other than Elvira herself.

Filled with anger and despair at her seeming unfaithfulness, Ernani flung aside his pilgrim's robe and recklessly revealed himself to the company, demanding to be given up to the King for execution, since he no longer desired to live.

Don Silva, however, though furious at the

intrusion of his hated rival, refused to give him up to justice, declaring that it was a particular point in his code of honour to regard the person of one whom he had received as his guest as sacred from harm or betrayal. With these proud words the old noble retired with his followers to give directions for the extra guarding of his castle, fearing lest a party of fugitive bandits might be lurking near their leader.

Ernani and Elvira were thus left alone for a few moments; and as her angry lover began to pour forth reproachful words upon her, the unhappy lady related to him how he had been reported to her as dead, and how she had been compelled to accept Don Silva's suit, declaring, however, that it had been her intention to destroy herself afterwards. Finding, therefore, that Elvira's heart was still faithful to him, Ernani clasped her in his arms once more; and the wretched pair bemoaned their sad fate together, knowing that they were in great peril.

At this moment Don Silva returned to the hall; and thus seeing that Elvira still loved the proscribed bandit, his jealousy was roused again, and he vowed vengeance upon Ernani. When, however, the proud bandit declared once more that he was willing to die, Don Silva still refused

to give him up, hoping for a more subtle and terrible revenge.

The attendants now announced that the King and a company of soldiers were clamouring at the gates for admission; and when Ernani had been hastily concealed in a secret chamber, and Elvira had retired to her own apartment, Don Carlos was admitted. The young King announced that he had scattered the bandit hordes, and now sought their chief; and adding that he had tracked Ernani to Castle Silva, he sternly demanded that he should be delivered up to him.

This command Don Silva stubbornly refused to carry out; whereupon the King gave orders for the castle to be searched. The soldiers, however, being unacquainted with the secret chamber, were unable to find the bandit; and then Carlos, furious at being defied, declared that if Ernani's head were not forthcoming he would take Don Silva's.

Whilst the nobleman was still protesting against betraying one who had been his guest, hoping thus to reserve Ernani for a more cruel fate, Elvira hastily entered the hall, and, falling on her knees before the King, she besought him not to engage in strife, but to have mercy on his foes.

On beholding the beautiful Elvira again the

King's suppressed love for her burned fiercely once more; and, taking her gently by the hand, he declared that he would now hold her as a hostage for the good faith of Don Silva, until Ernani should be delivered up to him. It was in vain that Don Silva protested against such a proceeding; and the weeping Elvira was at once taken away by the King to his palace.

When Ernani was at length led forth from his hiding-place, and learned that his beloved one was held as a hostage by the King, he was furious; and now regarding Don Silva as a companion in misfortune, he offered to join him in a scheme of vengeance against Carlos, who was their mutual enemy and rival in the affections of Elvira. Regarding his life, however, as forfeited to Silva, to whom he was grateful for having protected him so long, Ernani declared his willingness to die whenever his rival should desire it; and as a pledge of his solemn promise he gave the nobleman his hunting-horn, saying, "By this token, in the hour when thou wilt have Ernani perish, sound this horn, and I shall know it is the hour for me to die! "

Don Silva, thus recognising that he had Ernani in his power, gladly accepted him as a colleague in taking vengeance on the King; and the pair immediately sought out a band of conspirators who were at that time seeking to assassinate Carlos, who had not yet been unanimously accepted as King, and offered to join them in their enterprise. They were eagerly welcomed by the conspirators; and it was arranged that they should meet on a certain day in the Catacombs of Aquisgrano, and, by drawing lots, decide who should strike the fatal blow.

Meanwhile, Carlos had received information that a conspiracy had been formed against him; and as he was now almost certain of being accepted as King by the majority of the people, he bravely determined to face his secret foes and denounce them. He therefore bade his esquire to cause three salutes of cannon to be sounded should he be accepted as King at the final meeting of Electors to be held that day, that he might be sure of his regal power before denouncing his foes; and he also gave orders for the Ministers of State, together with the Lady Elvira, to be brought to him in the conspirators' meeting-place.

He then made his way alone to the Catacombs of Aquisgrana, and took up a position beside the mausoleum of his illustrious father, Charles the Great; and here many solemn and noble thoughts passed through the mind of the young prince. The sacred responsibility of his high position impressed itself upon him for the first time, so that a sense of his own frailty and weakness made him humbly conscious of his utter dependence upon a Higher Power than his own; and he solemnly registered a vow that if his kingship should be accepted that day, he would forego the careless pleasures and passions of youth, and devote himself loyally to the service of his country and people, and thereby win for himself a glorious name and virtue's "crown of deathless fame."

Having made this sacred resolve, the young King now concealed himself in the royal mausoleum, from whence he could see and hear all that passed without being observed; and a few minutes later the conspirators entered, all wrapped in long dark cloaks. Don Silva and Ernani had established themselves as the leaders; and after reciting their hatred of the monarchy, they drew lots for the privilege of killing the young Carlos.

The name drawn was that of Ernani; and Don Silva, greatly disappointed, entreated the bandit to resign the right in his favour. Ernani, however, refused to forego his privilege; and in spite of Silva's angry warning that his vengeance should quickly follow, he firmly declared that he alone should kill his royal rival.

Just as the lot had been thus decided, the conspirators were startled by the sound of a cannot shot repeated three times from the fortress of the city; and this being the signal for Don Carlos, he stepped forth from the mausoleum with a stern and regal air. At the same moment there entered from another door six Electors and the Ministers of State, followed by royal pages who bore the crown and regalia; and after these came a retinue of splendidly dressed lords and ladies, amongst whom was the pale and drooping Elvira.

At the bidding of the Electors the crown was placed upon the head of the young King, and he was solemnly hailed as the Sovereign; and Carlos, with equally dignified solemnity, accepted the charge laid upon him. Then, turning to the discomfited conspirators, he exposed their plot; and, denouncing them as traitors, he condemned the nobles to the block and the plebeians to prison. Ernani was herded with the latter; but refusing to bear such an insult, he now disclosed his true identity as a Duke of ancient family, and haughtily claimed the death of an aristocrat.

Carlos readily granted this plea; but Elvira,

in despair at thus losing her lover for ever, fell on her knees, and passionately implored the King to pardon Ernani, adding as her plea, "Virtue sublime is mercy in kings!"

As Carlos listened to the pleading voice of the beautiful Elvira, he was reminded of the sacred vow he had so recently made; and, desiring to win the affection of his people by ruling them with love and clemency, he now magnanimously proclaimed a gracious pardon for all the conspirators. Further than this, he steadfastly quelled the longings of his youthful heart, and resigned all further thoughts of Elvira; and knowing that her love was given to Ernani, he declared it to be his royal will that the pair should be united.

So the faithful lovers were wedded at last; and Ernani and his fair bride retired to the ex-bandit's ducal palace, where a noble company had assembled to bid them welcome and join in the bridal festivities. But amongst the merry company of wedding guests there glided a masked stranger, who greeted no one, and held himself aloof from all; and this was none other than Don Silva, who, less noble than his King, was consumed with fierce jealousy at the happiness of his favoured rival, and had now come to indulge in a cruel vengeance.

When the guests had departed, and Ernani and his bride were alone, they embraced each other with great joy, thankful that their troubles were over, and wondering at the unexpected happiness which lay before them; but suddenly they were startled by the loud lingering blast of a hunting-horn.

Ernani became pale as death, and his heart stiffened with horror; for he remembered his vow to Don Silva, and knew that this was the signal for him to die. Elvira was filled with alarm at his altered looks; but Ernani declared that he was unwell, and bade her fetch him a cordial, that in her absence he might brace himself for his fearful act. Full of grief that his cup of happiness should be thus snatched from him as he was about to enjoy it, he thought wildly for a moment of escape; but just as he was about to follow Elvira, Don Silva himself entered the room, and calmly bade him fulfil the solemn promise he had made, adding, with fiendish triumph, that one so nobly born and of such high character could not stoop to forswear himself.

Well did Ernani know this; for never yet had he broken his word to any living soul, nor could his high sense of honour permit him to do so now. Just as he drew his dagger, however, Elvira returned to the room; and now hearing of the fearful compact which had been made between the two rivals for her hand, she knelt before Don Silva and besought him, with distracted sobs, to release her beloved husband from his vow.

But Don Silva had steeled his heart to withstand this piteous appeal, and coldly announced that he awaited the fulfilment of his rival's vow; and Ernani, knowing well that he could expect no mercy from such a remorseless foe, and too proud to tarnish his honourable name by forswearing himself, clasped the weeping Elvira in a last embrace. Then quickly grasping his dagger he resolutely stabbed himself to the heart, faithful to the fatal promise he had made; and as Elvira, with a terrible cry of woe, fell senseless beside him, he expired, and Don Silva's vengeance was accomplished.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE.

ONE early morning during the eighteenth century, just as the rosy dawn appeared, the sound of soft, sweet music arose from one of the streets of Seville; for a group of picked musicians had been stationed in front of a private house to accompany a serenade to a certain fair lady who dwelt within.

A little apart from the musicians stood the singer, a tall, handsome cavalier, wrapped in a dark cloak; and as his song proceeded, the serenader kept his gaze riveted upon a window that led out upon the balcony of the house, as though expecting the form of his adored one to appear in that spot.

This cavalier was the Count Almaviva, a rich nobleman, who, having beheld one day, on a visit to Seville, a lovely maiden upon the balcony of this house, had straightway fallen in love with her; and, in consequence of this, he had left his country estate, and taken up his abode in Seville, that he might be near the object of his affections, and seek an opportunity to woo her.

He learnt that the young lady's name was

Rosina, and that she was the ward of a fussy old physician named Dr. Bartolo; and by means of nightly serenades and frequent strolls past her dwelling-place, the young Count endeavoured to bring himself to the notice of the maiden. Nor was he unsuccessful; for the lovely Rosina, although kept almost a prisoner by her jealous guardian, who desired to wed her himself, managed to obtain sight of her serenader, and quickly conceived a romantic passion for him.

In spite of the mutual understanding between them, the pair had never yet met, nor spoken with each other; and to-night the Count had hoped to attain this object. But Rosina was too closely watched by her guardian and her duenna; and when the dawn at length broke Almaviva sadly dismissed his musicians, sending them away with a handsome reward.

After the delighted musicians had departed, the Count remained dejectedly near the abode of his beloved one; and here he was presently accosted by the popular barber and general factotum of the town, a merry roguish fellow named Figaro, whose quick wit and lively mercurial temperament caused him to be in constant request by his many patrons for their jokes and intrigues.

Quickly noticing the dejected looks of the strange cavalier, Figaro entered into conversation with him, offering his services, should he need them; and merrily he described his numerous valuable qualities to the Count, declaring that he was the best matchmaker, plotter, and gossip in all Seville, to say nothing of being the most fashionable adept in his more legitimate occupation of chirurgeon-barber.

Almaviva quickly succumbed to the charm of the roguish barber; and seeing at once that he might be of great use to him, he confided to him the secret of his love for Rosina, and engaged him to help him in his suit, promising to reward him very handsomely for his services.

Figaro readily agreed to devote himself to the interest of this new patron; and very quickly his inventive wit suggested ways and means for bringing the lovers together. He informed the Count that old Dr. Bartolo desired to wed his charming ward himself, regardless of the disparity in their ages and the indifference of the lady; in which ridiculous project he was being aided and abetted by another equally fussy old fellow, one Don Basilio, a music-master. However, as the barber was constantly in and out of the house, he assured the Count that he would find means to communicate with Rosina, and to

hoodwink her guardian; and with this assurance

the Count departed, greatly cheered.

Figaro's artful plans succeeded so well that Rosina soon learnt that her love was returned by the handsome cavalier who haunted the precincts of her home, and whom the barber described as a young student named Lindoro; and she now managed to send him a note, in which she declared that his love was acceptable to her.

The Count was thus filled with joy; and, with the aid of the inventive barber, an interview between the enamoured pair was now devised. At the suggestion of Figaro, the Count disguised himself one evening as a common soldier; and pretending also to be intoxicated, he forced his way with a rowdy, roystering manner into the house of Dr. Bartolo, from whom he demanded a night's lodging as the rightful due of one who served his ountry; and during the stormy altercation that ensued between the indignant Doctor and himself, Rosina, attracted by the noise, made her appearance.

Quickly lurching to her side, the pretended soldier managed to reveal his true identity to her; and though instantly separated by the angry and jealous Doctor, the lovers contrived dexterously to exchange letters. The interview was soon brought to an end by the arrival of the guard, drawn thither by the commotion, into whose charge the Doctor gladly handed over his unwelcome guest; but as the officers hurried him away the Count declared to them his real name, and showed them, in proof of his assertion, the high orders and decorations he wore beneath his disguise, upon which they set him free, and respectfully departed, the richer by a substantial gift.

Shortly afterwards the indefatigable Figaro devised another scheme for the meeting of the lovers; and this time, Almaviva, disguised as a poor musician, was unsuspectingly admitted into the house of Dr. Bartolo, to whom he explained that his name was Don Alonzo, and that he had been sent by his friend Don Basilio, whom he

Finding himself not very well received by the old guardian, he handed to him the note he had received from Rosina, pretending he had found it in the inn where Count Almaviva lodged, and offering to show it to the young lady and declare to her that it had been sent by one of the Count's other numerous admirers, that she might thus become estranged from him.

declared to be ill.

Dr. Bartolo, quite unsuspicious of trickery, readily agreed to this ruse, being very anxious

to put an end to his ward's infatuation for the Count, who, as he of course knew by this time, was haunting the neighbourhood; and he thus consented to allow the music lesson to proceed, in order that this disturbing communication

might be made to his ward.

He thereupon brought Rosina into the room, and introduced her to the supposed Don Alonzo, in whom, however, she quickly recognised her lover; and at that moment Figaro most opportunely arrived in his capacity as barber to Dr. Bartolo, in order to keep the old gentleman obligingly occupied with his toilet, so that the lovers might make arrangements for their elopement, which the Count desired to carry out that night.

Very cleverly, also, the barber managed to secure the keys of certain doors usually kept locked at night, so that Rosina, at the appointed time, could reach the balcony, from whence, by means of a ladder, she could escape to her

lover.

In order to disarm the Doctor's still evident suspicion, the form of a singing lesson was gone through; but, thanks to Figaro's constant chatter and deft manipulation of his client's beard, the lovers managed to exchange confidences between the snatches of music, and made all the arrangements for their elopement and secret marriage that night.

All went well until, quite suddenly, the old music-master himself appeared on the scene, very much astonished at finding his place and occupation usurped by a strange young man. Figaro, however, with his usual versatility, saved the situation by pretending that Don Basilio really looked extremely ill, and, feeling his pulse with mock anxiety, declared him to be in a high fever, and entreated him to return home to bed. The Count also, by the judicious offer of a well-filled purse, succeeded in persuading the confused professor to depart for the time being.

Dr. Bartolo's suspicions, however, were now fully roused, so that it became necessary for the Count to make a quick escape; and when he had gone the old guardian fussily produced the letter given him by the pretended musician, and endeavoured on his own account to poison Rosina's mind against her lover in the manner agreed upon. Rosina's jealousy against some unknown rival was thus quickly kindled; and angry and distressed at having been deceived, as she supposed, by the Count, she revealed the secret arrangement for her elopement that night.

The wily old Doctor quickly followed up the vantage he had scored, and now pressed his own

suit; and Rosina, in a fit of pique, giving him her consent, he hurried away to make arrangements with a notary to unite them that day. Meeting with Don Basilio, and now learning from him that the strange musician and Count Almaviva were one and the same, he hurried on his plans with still greater eagerness, feeling that with such a daring rival he could not consider himself safe until his marriage contract with Rosina had been signed; and having arranged with the music-master to bring the notary along that same night, he went away to procure the officers of justice to be in readiness to arrest the Count and Figaro should they appear and endeavour to upset his plans.

But success was to be with love and youth; for the star of the Count was in the ascendant, and, with the aid of the irrepressible Figaro, he

was able to accomplish his ends.

Fortunately, the elopement had been planned for the early part of the night; and as soon as darkness set in Almaviva and the barber made their appearance in front of the Doctor's house, and, by means of a ladder, succeeded in reaching the balcony. Here they were presently joined by Rosina, who, though already repenting of her jealous fit, at first repulsed her eager lover, charging him with unfaithfulness; but upon the

cavalier explaining the whole matter of the letter, at the same time revealing his true identity as the Count Almaviva, she was quickly reconciled to him.

Whilst the now happy lovers were thus engaged in tender converse, the alert Figaro discovered that the ladder by which they were to reach the ground below had been taken away; and at the same moment Don Basilio appeared on the balcony with the notary, who had brought the contract for the marriage of Rosina with Dr. Bartolo.

Seeing that no time was to be lost, the three plotters hurried forward, the Count declaring to the notary that Rosina and himself were the parties who were to sign the document; and drawing the amazed Don Basilio aside, he slipped a valuable ring on to his finger, and advised him to be amenable to reason, at the same time judiciously showing him a loaded pistol as an even more persuasive argument.

The old music-master prudently accepted the forced situation with a good grace; and the Count and Rosina immediately signed the marriage contract in the presence of the notary, with Figaro and Don Basilio as their witnesses.

Just as the joyful lover: were thus lawfully united, Dr. Bartolo arrived with the officers of

justice; and seeing that the Count and Figaro had indeed appeared, as he had suspected they would, he furiously denounced them as thieves and rogues, and commanded the officers to arrest them.

However, Almaviva advanced readily, and with great dignity announced himself as a Grandee of Spain and the newly-made husband of the fair Rosina; and eventually, after a somewhat stormy scene, enlivened by the witty raillery of the lively Figaro, the old Doctor acknowledged his defeat, and reconciled himself to the inevitable with excellent good humour, even magnanimously bestowing a fatherly blessing upon the triumphant pair.

Thus did these determined lovers gain their hearts' desire; and when Count Almaviva returned home with his charming bride, he took with him as his confidential body-servant the man whose fertile wit had helped him to win his happiness—Figaro the merry Barber of

Seville.

LURLINE.

Beneath the billows of the great Rhine River dwelt the King of the Water Spirits, Rhineberg the Powerful, for whom the gnomes of the under-world and the sea had gathered together wonderful treasures of gold and jewels, such as were not even dreamed of by mortals; and here in his palace of crystal and pearl he held a mighty sway.

It was a merry court he held; for his beautiful daughter, Lurline, the fairest of all the river nymphs, loved to dance upon the sparkling floors with her attendant nymphs, and to sing to the

music of the flowing waves.

But at last there came a change, and Lurline was merry no longer. One evening, as the fair nymph rested upon the Lurlei-berg, a rock that jutted over a whirlpool, playing upon her harp and singing the thrilling song of enchantment with which she lured her mortal victims to destruction at the bidding of her powerful spirit father, a handsome young nobleman named Rudolph sailed by in an airy skiff; and as Lurline gazed upon the exquisite beauty of this youth,

a passionate love for him grew up in her heart, and, dropping her harp just as her song had begun to enthral him, she could no longer bear to lure him to his doom.

After this she grew sad, and sighed for the Count Rudolph with every breath; and when the Rhine King knew that his daughter loved a mortal, he was filled with dismay and anger. Finding, however, that in spite of his reproaches Lurline could not forget the beautiful youth she had seen, he gave her permission to seek him out in his own home, hoping that she would quickly discover mortal love to be but a frail, unworthy thing, and would then renounce it; and the water maiden gladly availed herself of her father's permission, and went forth to seek her earthly lover.

Meanwhile, the young Count Rudolph was passing through a time of difficulty and trouble; for, having spent his wealth on the gay pleasures of youth, he had no longer the necessary means to keep up proper state in his ancient castle home. Thinking to mend his fortunes by making a wealthy marriage, he began to pay his addresses to Lady Ghiva, the daughter of an old Baron, whom he believed to be very rich, but who was in reality quite as poor as himself; and his court was acceptable to the haughty Ghiva,

who had long cherished admiration and affection for the handsome youth, believing him also to be rich enough to satisfy all her wants.

When, however, at a festive ball given by the Baron in his honour, Rudolph laid his heart at her feet, but declared that he had no great wealth to offer her, the disappointed lady refused him with disdain, and Rudolph returned to his castle in chagrin. His merry companions, however, sought to cheer his drooping spirits with lively songs and revelry; but Rudolph found comfort from another source.

There suddenly came into his thoughts the memory of that evening, when, as he rowed himself in his skiff upon the Rhine, he had heard the thrilling, enticing voice of a water nymph; and as the words of her sweet song now came back to him, he began to sing them to his companions, who listened to him in delight.

But soon their delight was changed into dismay; for as the young Count sang the words of this strange sweet song, Lurline herself suddenly appeared in the banqueting hall, as though in answer to his call.

The lovely water nymph at once approached Rudolph, and began to weave a spell of enchantment over him; and having placed a magic ring upon his finger as a talisman against all danger,

she disappeared as suddenly as she had come.

But her thrilling voice, singing to the accompaniment of a magic harp, could be heard calling from the river; and Rudolph, on recovering from the stupor into which he had been thrown, now became so violently enamoured of the beautiful nymph that he sprang from his seat and rushed down to the shore, following the sound of her luring song with ecstasy.

His friends, fearing that he was being enticed to destruction, endeavoured to check his impetuous course, and to hold him back from danger; but Rudolph, reckless of what lay before him, and intoxicated with the charm of the water maiden's irresistible song, flung all detaining hands from him, and plunged eagerly into the river. The waves of the Lurlei-berg whirlpool flowed over him, but were powerless to harm him, because of the magic ring he wore; and Lurline, full of joy, conveyed him to her own palace of corals, where they spent together a period of delirious happiness.

But one day Rudolph heard the voices of his old companions mourning his loss, as they sadly rode overhead in their skiffs; and, longing to greet them once again, he begged the lovely Lurline to permit him to leave her for a few days,

promising to return to her.

Lurline, though fearful of being parted from the mortal lover she adored, yet could not bear to cause him pain by refusing his request; so she gave her consent, declaring that she would await his return at the end of three days on the Lurlei-berg.

Rudolph now desired to take back with him some of the lavish wealth he saw around him; and Lurline, having been given the keys of her father's treasure-chambers during his temporary absence, took him therein to take his fill.

As it happened, Rhineberg returned at that moment, and was enraged on discovering what the lovers were about; but when Lurline pleaded for pardon he could not resist her sweet charm, and ended by giving Rudolph vast treasures to take back with him to his castle.

The young Count then departed; and on his arrival at his home the news of his altered fortunes quickly spread. The Baron and his daughter Ghiva were now very anxious to encourage the suitor they had formerly rejected; and to them Rudolph revealed the secret of his newly-acquired wealth, showing them the magic ring he had received from Lurline, and singing the praises of the lovely water nymph so rapturously that the Baron's daughter was quickly filled with a consuming jealousy, and snatching

the ring from his finger, she furiously flung it into the midst of the river.

With the loss of the magic ring the spell of Lurline departed also; and Rudolph, forgetful of his love for the fair nymph, began to find pleasure in the advances made by the cunning Ghiva, and to engage in revellings and feastings once more.

In the meantime, fair Lurline sat upon the Lurlei-berg rock, singing her sweet love-songs as she patiently awaited the return of the mortal she adored; but when one day a slave-gnome of her father's brought to her the magic ring which she had given to Rudolph, and which had been now found in the river, she could not help but believe her lover to be faithless.

Filled with woe, and yet enraged that her love should have been slighted by a mortal, she resolved to seek out Rudolph once more, and to reproach him for his faithlessness.

Accordingly, she appeared at a splendid festival which was being held on the banks of the Rhine, in honour of the young Count's birthday; and, quickly approaching Rudolph, she began to pour bitter reproaches upon him for deserting her loving arms for the sake of his mortal companions, some of whom, she informed him, were even now plotting his assassination that they might seize his treasures.

Her wrath, however, vanished when Rudolph explained how his magic ring had been taken from him by force, and declared that he still loved her with his whole heart; for the magic charm of her sweet presence had once more enveloped the young Count, and he felt that her love alone could satisfy the longings of his heart.

Meanwhile, his false companions, as he had been warned by Lurline, were even now hatching a plot to murder him and seize his wealth; and their plans were overheard by the Lady Ghiva and her father, who quickly informed Rudolph of his danger, and besought him to

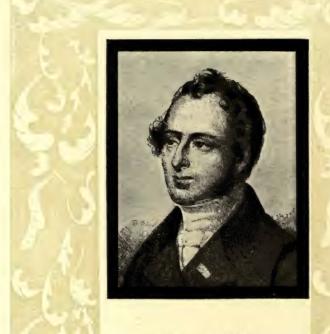
save his life by instant flight.

But the young Count declared that he would rather die by the side of his beloved Lurline than fly as a coward; and, boldly drawing his sword, he met his enemies undaunted.

Then Lurline, knowing that her lover's life was in utmost danger, took up her harp, and sang a wild song of invocation to the Spirits of the Rhine, so that the noble river suddenly rose in a mighty flood, and immersed the would-be murderers.

When the waters had once more returned to their accustomed bounds, Rhineberg, the River King, appeared, and, to the great joy of the lovers, he now gave his gracious consent to their union. Thus did Lurline, the lovely Daughter of the Rhine, secure her heart's desire; and as she gazed into the eyes of her mortal lover, she knew that she had not lived in vain, since she had gained the greatest of all treasures—the jewel of Love.





BELLINI.

I PURITANI,

During the great civil war between the royal House of Stuart and the Parliament, at the time when Charles the Second was a fugitive, the fortress of Plymouth was held by the Parliamentary Army; and here the commander of the fortress, Lord Walton, a Puritan sternly devoted to the side he had espoused, had brought his lovely young daughter, Elvira, that she might be safe from the many dangers of that troublous time.

The sweetness and grace of Elvira quickly gained her many admirers; for even the sombre Puritans were not proof against the enthralling charms of youth and beauty.

Amongst these admirers was Sir Richard Forth, a colonel in the Parliamentary forces; and being of good family and excellent repute amongst the Puritans, he met with a very favourable reception when he brought his suit to Lord Walton, who readily accepted him as his future son-in-law.

Elvira, however, had already, unknown to her father, given her heart to a Cavalier officer, Lord Arthur Talbot, who held a high position in the Royalist Army; and when she was told that the Puritan officer had been accepted as her suitor, she was filled with dismay, knowing such a loveless marriage could bring nothing but misery, yet believing that her father would never consent to her union with her Cavalier lover.

In this dilemma, she confided her troubles to her uncle, Lord George Walton, who, though a retired Puritan officer, yet remained in the fortress to assist his brother in the command; and this gentleman, who loved Elvira as his own child, was so deeply moved by her passionate appeal for his aid that he promised to use every endeavour in his power to bring about her union with the man she loved.

At first, Lord George was not successful in his interview with his brother on Elvira's behalf; for the stern Puritan officer had no desire to connect himself with a Cavalier family, and declared that he had already promised his daughter to Sir Richard Forth, who was in every way a suitable husband for her.

When, however, his brother, who cared less for political and religious distinctions, declared that Elvira's highly-strung system and loving nature could never bear the tragedy of a loveless marriage, and that it would certainly break her heart should it be forced upon her, Lord Walton was no longer proof against such an appeal as this; for he was a devoted father, and loved his daughter with very tender affection. He therefore agreed that the undesired betrothal with Sir Richard Forth should be set aside at once; and he also signified his consent to Elvira's marriage with Lord Arthur Talbot, giving instructions for the young Cavalier to be admitted into the fortress on the morrow, that the nuptials might be celebrated there without further delay.

Elvira was filled with the utmost joy when her uncle brought her these glad tidings; and preparations for the wedding ceremony were commenced forthwith, so that a merry bustle was quickly set up in the sombre castle.

The young Cavalier was also overjoyed at this happy turn of events; and he needed no second bidding to prepare for his wedding with the beautiful maiden he loved so well.

On his arrival at the fortress next morning, Lord Arthur received a joyous welcome from all; for his many deeds of bravery and chivalry had won him universal renown, so that even the Puritan followers of Lord Walton had words of praise and admiration for this noble young Cavalier, who was to be wedded to their leader's daughter that day.

A glad meeting took place between Elvira and

her lover; and then, whilst the happy maiden retired to don her bridal robes, Arthur remained in the courtyard of the castle, where his tender thoughts were unexpectedly diverted into another channel.

As he waited there, a captive lady, closely guarded, was brought out from the fortress into the courtyard, where she was informed by Lord Walton that she was about to be escorted to the Parliamentary tribunal, there to receive her sentence.

The despairing looks of the captive lady moved Arthur to deep pity; and on learning from Lord George that she had been imprisoned several months in the fortress as one strongly suspected of favouring the Stuart cause and of having acted as their spy, and that she would certainly be condemned to the scaffold, the young Cavalier, as a fellow-adherent of the Royalists, determined to seek speech with her.

Therefore, whilst the attention of the officers and guards was turned in another direction for a short time, he managed to get sufficiently near the lady to enter into a low-toned conversation with her; and then, to his utter horror and dismay, he discovered that the captive was none other than the widow of the unfortunate Charles the First, Queen Henrietta, who, whilst engaged

in disguise on a secret enterprise on behalf of her fugitive son, had been captured by her enemies and thrust by them into Plymouth fortress, where, though still preserving her incognito, she knew herself to be in the utmost danger.

Arthur, ever faithful to the Stuart cause, now felt it to be his sacred duty to rescue the unfortunate Queen from her desperate situation; and he told the unhappy Henrietta that he would

do all in his power to save her.

At this moment, the bride and her maidens returned to the courtyard; and Elvira, whose tender heart could not bear that another should be in trouble when she herself was so full of joy, at once approached the captive lady, for whose sad fate she had already many times grieved, and tried to cheer her with words of comfort. She even playfully removed her long bridal veil, and drooped it over Henrietta's dark locks, clapping her hands merrily at the effect, and declaring that she would make a beautiful bride; and the Queen, forgetting her sadness for the moment, was so charmed with the youthful grace and sweet innocence of Elvira, that she indulgently suffered her artless playfulness.

The time for the ceremony was now almost due; and Elvira was hurried away by her uncle

to the chapel so quickly that she had not time to don her veil again, but gaily called to Henrietta to follow her with it, forgetting in her eager excitement that the poor lady was a captive.

As the bridal party trooped into the chapel, Arthur slipped back to the courtyard, blessing the happy chance which had left Henrietta in possession of the bridal veil; and bidding the Queen to wrap it closely about her face and form, he hurried her to the gates of the courtyard, hoping that she might now be mistaken for Elvira, and be thus permitted to pass through.

In spite of his anguish at being compelled to leave his beloved Elvira at the very moment of their union, Arthur was too loyal a Royalist to forsake his Queen in her extremity; and crushing down the strong temptation to return to his waiting bride, he steadfastly conducted his royal

charge to the fortress gates.

Here, to his dismay, he found Sir Richard Forth on guard; and the Puritan officer, severely smarting from the sudden cancellation of his bethrothal with Elvira, and believing the veiled lady to be the bride, refused to let them pass, and challenged his successful rival to mortal combat. When, however, Henrietta lifted her veil, and in terrified accents bade the pair sheathe their swords, the Puritan saw that he had made a mis-

take; and he at once gave his permission for them to pass through the gates, hoping that by reporting the secret departure of Arthur with the captive lady, he would prove to Elvira the faithlessness of her Cavalier lover, and thus further his own suit once more.

Arthur and the Queen thus escaped safely from the fortress; and as soon as the news became known, the greatest consternation prevailed. A number of Parliamentary soldiers were quickly sent out to search for the fugitives; but Lord Arthur cleverly succeeded in eluding them, until he had placed the Queen on board a ship, in which she was safely conveyed to France.

Meanwhile, Elvira had received a terrible shock on learning of the desertion of her lover at the very moment of their marriage; and being led by the story of Sir Richard Forth to believe him faithless, her grief was so frantic that she completely lost her reason. The poor girl would wander out alone into the woods every day, now prattling childishly of happy days gone by, and anon imagining herself in the company of her beloved Arthur; and all the inmates of the fortress were filled with sorrow at the terrible change which had taken place in her.

Lord Arthur Talbot was now proscribed and condemned to death by the Parliamentary

Government for having effected the escape of a political prisoner; but Sir Richard Forth, who had special influence with his party, was at length persuaded by Elvira's uncle to plead for the young Cavalier's life to be spared, should he be captured, for the kindly old Puritan hoped that if his distraught niece could be brought face to face with her lover once more, her reason might be restored.

At last, Arthur, having succeeded in eluding his enemies for several months, managed to return to Plymouth, intending to enter the fortress once more, in spite of danger, and to claim his bride; and as he hurried cautiously through the neighbouring wood, he happened to meet Elvira herself, who was aimlessly wandering there as usual, singing wild and plaintive ditties, with the unmistakable air of one bereft of reason.

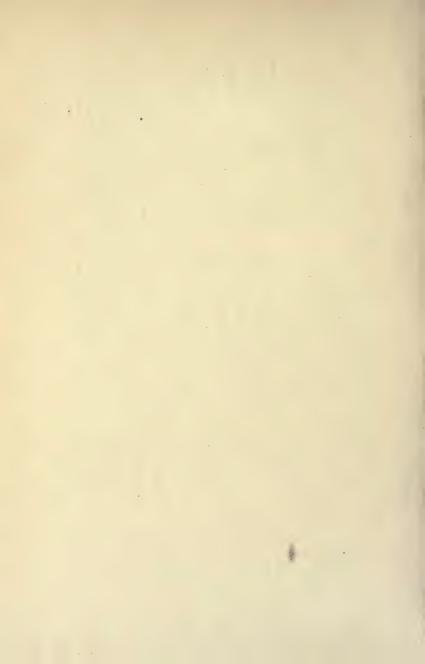
Terribly grieved and shocked at beholding his beloved one in such a condition, Arthur approached, and gently folded her in his arms, uttering tender words of greeting. As Lord George had foretold, the reappearance of Arthur did indeed restore Elvira's mental balance; and with great delight, she returned his embraces, and listened gladly to the story of his adventures, and his explanation as to the true identity of the

captive lady whom he had thought it his duty to save from the scaffold.

Even as the restored lovers thus talked happily together, the Puritan search party arrived on the scene, having learnt of Arthur's return to the neighbourhood, and now tracked him to the wood; and dragging the young Cavalier from the arms of Elvira, they bade him prepare for instant death.

At this distressing moment, however, another party, headed by Lord George Walton and Sir Richard Forth, came galloping up, and ordered the immediate release of the prisoner; and as the search party drew back in surprise, they were triumphantly informed that news had just arrived that the Parliamentary forces had finally conquered the Royalists, and that in celebration of the event, all political prisoners were pardoned.

All was now peace and rejoicing; and Elvira, the Puritan maiden, completely restored to reason once more by the return of her lover, was united to the young Cavalier without further delay.



ROMEO AND JULIET.

In the city of Verona, a fierce private feud had existed for many years between the two noble families of Capulet and Montague; and to such a degree was this hatred carried that it was even shared by the servants, followers, and friends of the two rival houses, with the result that if a Capulet partisan met a Montague partisan, they invariably came to blows, and did not hesitate to shed each other's blood.

One evening, it happened that a grand supper and masked ball was held at the palace of Lord Capulet; and to this festival all the chief lords and ladies of Verona were invited, with the exception, of course, of any members of the hated Montague family.

However, the son of Lord Montague, whose name was Romeo, and who was a handsome and daring young man of a romantic disposition, boldly announced his intention of attending, uninvited, the revels at the house of his family foe; and, disguised in the dress of a pilgrim, and masked, he proceeded thither, accompanied by his bosom friends, Benvolio and Mercutio.

They were admitted, unquestioned, into the

house, and mingled with the guests; and for a while no one suspected that a Montague was taking part in the revels.

Amongst the merry throng of dancers, Romeo very quickly noticed a beautiful young girl, whose wonderful grace and charm strangely fascinated him; and drawing the attention of his friends to this maiden, he exclaimed enthusiastically:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear; Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear! So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows. The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand, And touching hers, make blessed my rude hand. Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night!

This speech was overheard by a kinsman of the Capulets, a fiery youth named Tybalt, who immediately recognised the voice as that of one of his detested foemen; and, furious that a Montague should have thus dared to enter the house of Capulet, he challenged Romeo, and would have slain him then and there, had not old Lord Capulet himself interfered, and commanded him to sheathe his weapon, declaring that his enemy's son should remain for that

night, since he was a young man spoken of in the city with honour and respect.

So peace was temporarily restored; and presently, Romeo secured an opportunity of speaking with the lovely maiden whose fair looks had so quickly enslaved his heart. He found that the lady's disposition was as sweet and gentle as her looks; and to his joy she evinced great pleasure in his conversation, and returned his advances with many signs of favour.

Presently, the maiden was called away, and when she had departed, Romeo learnt that she was the daughter of Lord Capulet, and that her name was Iuliet.

Although filled with dismay that he had thus fallen in love with his enemy's daughter, and knowing that he would put himself in great danger should he venture to make further advances to her, Romeo was quite determined to see the lovely maiden again; and with this object in view, when the revels came to an end, he made his way into the Capulet's garden, thinking of this new joy which had already filled his heart so completely.

To his delight, Juliet presently stepped out on to the balcony outside her chamber window; for she also was thinking of the strange, sweet love which had so suddenly filled her whole being at the ardent gaze of the handsome young pilgrim who had conversed with her at the ball, and wished to breath her happy thoughts into the

moonlit night.

But Juliet had also learnt that this noble youth, whose eager words had so quickly and unresistingly won her heart, was the son of Lord Montague, and that she ought to hate, rather than love him; and as she thought of this troublesome difficulty in the path of her happiness, she murmured softly:

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father, and refuse thy name; Of if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet. 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy: Thou are thyself, though not a Montague; What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot, Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part Belonging to a man. O, be some other name! What's in a name? that which we call a rose, By any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd, Retain that dear perfection which he owes, Without that title: Romeo, doff thy name; And for thy name, which is no part of thee, Take all myself!

On hearing these words, which proved to him that Juliet returned his love, Romeo crept softly forward and made his presence known to her, replying to her spoken thought thus:

I take thee at thy word!
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo!

I

Juliet was filled with joy at thus beholding the object of her sweet reflections, giving him a tender greeting; and in answer to her question as to how he had effected his entrance into the garden without the knowledge of her kinsmen, Romeo replied:

With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;

For stony limits cannot hold love out: And what love can do, that dares love attempt; Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me!

For a long while the lovers talked happily together; and in spite of the fact that Juliet had already been promised by her parents to a young man of noble family named Paris, she now gladly listened to Romeo's passionate declaration of love, and vowed that she would wed with none other but him.

Several times their sweet converse was interrupted by Juliet's old nurse calling to her charge from within the chamber; and at last the maiden was obliged to tear herself away from the presence of her adoring lover, and retire to rest.

But Romeo did not return to his home immediately; and as dawn was already breaking, he made his way to a neighbouring monastery, in order to seek the help of a good old monk named Friar Laurence.

The old Friar, who had a deep affection for the youth, listened indulgently to his rapturous recital of the love he had conceived for the beautiful Juliet; but when Romeo eagerly besought him to unite them in marriage that very day, he was at first horrified at such a wild suggestion. However, when Romeo again begged him to comply with his request, the good father at last consented; for it now occurred to him that good might come of such a deed, since this union possibly would lead to the healing of the ancient feud between the two rival houses.

A little later in the day a message was secretly conveyed to Juliet, who, with the aid of her old nurse, in whom she had confided, found means to make her way to Friar Laurence's cell, where Romeo was awaiting her; and there the old monk performed the rite of marriage for the loving pair, and made them man and wife. Juliet then hurried back to her home with speed, fearing lest her absence should be remarked, for she did not dare to breathe a word of what had passed; and Romeo, after declaring that he would see her again in the garden after nightfall, went to meet his friends, Benvolio and Mercutio, whom he had arranged to meet in a certain street.

To his dismay, he found them engaged in a hot dispute with the fiery-tempered young Capulet, Tybalt, who, having met them in the street, had quickly sought a quarrel in order to vent his suppressed rage at their temerity of the night before; and in spite of Romeo's efforts to make peace between them, being now desirous of establishing more friendly relations with his beloved Juliet's kinsfolk, Mercutio and Tybalt drew their swords, and engaged in a deadly fight, which ended in Mercutio receiving a mortal wound.

On seeing his friend fall in an expiring condition, Romeo, full of grief and indignation, at once made a furious onslaught upon Tybalt; and in the struggle which followed he killed the Capulet noble.

By this time, the news of the encounter had spread in the city, and soon members of both the Capulet and Montague families hurried to the spot, together with the Prince of Verona himself, who had been summoned by the watch.

Lady Capulet was overcome with grief at the death of Tybalt, who was her nephew, and with tearful entreaties insisted on Romeo's summary punishment; and Lady Montague as earnestly defended her son's action in avenging the death of his friend Mercutio. The matter ended in the Duke declaring sentence of immediate banishment upon Romeo; and, full of despair,

the young man concealed himself until nighttime in Friar Laurence's cell, being determined

to see Juliet before leaving the city.

When darkness fell, Romeo made his way once more to the Capulet's garden, and, scaling the balcony, bade a long and passionate farewell to the weeping Juliet. With the first signs of dawn, he was compelled to depart, with a last fond embrace; and then, with a heavy heart, and reluctant steps, he made his way to Mantua, from whence his messengers and friends could keep him acquainted with all news concerning the fair young bride from whom he had been thus so cruelly parted.

Very soon after the departure of Romeo, Juliet found herself in a position of the utmost difficulty; for her parents determined that her marriage with the brilliant young Count Paris should take place without further delay, and the nuptials were announced to be celebrated a few

days hence.

It was in vain that the dismayed Juliet, not daring to reveal the fact of her secret marriage with the banished Romeo, pleaded her extreme youth, her indifference to Paris, and the family mourning for their kinsman, Tybalt; for her parents were indignant at her unwillingness and disobedience to their wishes, and declared that

they would cast her off for ever should she fail to accept Paris as her husband on the Thursday appointed.

Poor Juliet, full of woe and dismay, sighed

distractedly:

Is there no pity sitting in the clouds That sees into the bottom of my grief?

Then, suddenly, she bethought her of the kind old monk who had wedded her to Romeo; and leaving the house with the utmost secrecy, she made her way to the cell of Friar Laurence, to whom she poured forth her tale of woe, and besought him to counsel her in this terrible dilemma.

It happened that the old Friar had studied the properties of many valuable drugs; and presently he declared that he could provide Juliet with a certain potion which, if she drank it just before the approaching wedding festivities began, would cause her to fall into a trance, so that her friends, thinking her to be dead, would place her in the family vault, from whence, on waking after forty-two hours had elapsed, she could be rescued by Romeo, and secretly conveyed to Mantua, where they could dwell happily together.

The Friar then asked the maiden if she had

the courage to go through this ordeal; and Juliet, overjoyed at the thought of being thus preserved for her beloved Romeo, answered eagerly:

Give me, give me! O tell not me of fear! Love, give me strength! and strength shall help afford!

So the old Friar gave her a phial containing the potion, and promised to send messengers to Romeo, that he might come secretly at night to the vault to rescue her on her awakening; and Juliet departed to her home much comforted.

She now no longer refused to wed Count Paris; and when the bridal day arrived, she moved quite calmly amongst the throng of merry guests. But she had not forgotten the old Friar's potion; and in spite of the horror she felt at the thought of awakening in the gloomy family vault, in which her cousin Tybalt was already lying, she had bravely conquered her fears, and secretly swallowed the contents of the phial with these words:

Romeo, Romeo! I drink to thee!

Her parents and their guests were therefore horrorstruck when, soon after the festivities had begun, the lovely Juliet fell to the ground, apparently dead; and the revels ended in the greatest confusion and dismay. Lord and Lady Capulet were overcome with grief at what they supposed to be the sudden death of their fair young daughter; and with heartrending tears and cries of woe, the still, cold form of Juliet was laid to rest on a bier in the family vault.

Friar Laurence, after waiting to hear how his plot had succeeded, despatched a messenger to Mantua to inform Romeo of all that had happened, and to bid him come secretly to rescue his bride on her awakening; but, unhappily, before the good father's messenger arrived in Mantua, Romeo had already heard from another source the terrible news of Juliet's supposed death.

Thus knowing nothing of the old monk's plan, and believing his beloved one to be dead, Romeo was distracted with grief; but, determined to at least look once more upon the sweet face of Juliet, even though in death, he instantly mounted a horse, and galloped at a furious pace to Verona.

He reached the city at midnight of the second day since Juliet had been reported dead; and making his way at once to the churchyard, he secured a torch and mattock, and began fiercely to break open the tomb of the Capulets. He was just about to enter the vault when he was

interrupted by a newcomer, who cried to him sternly:

Stop thy unhallowed toil, vile Montague!

These words were spoken by Count Paris, who had also come to weep beside the remains of his lost bride; and on seeing Romeo there before him, he believed him to have come for some evil purpose.

Romeo was now half frantic with his grief; and refusing to be delayed in his quest, he drew his sword upon Paris. The two fought furiously in the dark, until at last Paris fell mortally wounded; and when Romeo took up the torch to look upon the face of his fallen antagonist, and recognised the features of Paris, his sorrow was increased, and he said:

One writ with me in sour misfortune's book! I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave!

He therefore lifted the dead youth tenderly, and laid him within the vault, that he might at least share the resting-place of the maiden he had loved; and then, placing the torch against the wall, he knelt, overwhelmed with despair, beside the bier of Juliet.

So fair and lovely did she still appear that at

first he could scarcely believe her to be dead; but when he felt her still, cold form, he could doubt it no longer. He had already determined that he could not bear to live on without Juliet; and with this object he had broken his journey once in order to procure from an apothecary some deadly poison which should act instantaneously. He now bent down to bid his beloved one farewell, and to kiss her cold lips for the last time; and then, drawing forth the phial, he swallowed the poison, saying:

Here's to my love! . . . Thus with a kiss I die!

The poison took effect immediately; and with a sigh, Romeo fell dead beside the bier of his bride.

It happened that this was the hour at which Juliet was to awaken from her trance; and Friar Laurence therefore now appeared at the opening of the vault, fearing that his messenger had been delayed, since he had seen nothing yet of the banished Montague; and when he entered the cell and beheld the dead bodies of Paris and Romeo, he guessed at the terrible catastrophe that had occurred, and uttered loud cries of woe.

At this moment, Juliet awakened from her death-like sleep, and looked around her in

wondering horror; and the old Friar besought her earnestly to leave the vault.

But Juliet's eyes had already fallen upon the dead body of her beloved Romeo, and from the empty phial in his hand, she at once gathered that he had poisoned himself upon believing her to be dead; and in an agony of grief, she came down from her bier to clasp her lover's limp form in her arms, whilst the Friar fled in alarm at the sound of approaching steps, for the disturbance at the tomb had by this time attracted the notice of the watch, who were now hastily bringing both Capulets and Montagues to the churchyard.

Juliet also heard the approaching sounds, and knew she must act quickly; for she was determined to live no longer, since her lover was dead. As she clasped Romeo in her arms, she kissed him passionately, hoping to imbibe some of the poison from his silent lips; but finding this unavailing, she drew forth the dagger which he wore, and with it stabbed herself to the heart

with these last words:

O, happy dagger! This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die!

The kinsfolk of the two unfortunate lovers now rushed into the vault, accompanied by Friar Laurence, who had returned to relate the sad story; and as the bereaved parents wept together over the dead bodies of their beloved children, and understood that their tragic fate had entirely arisen from the old selfish family feud, they humbly joined hands in token of mutual forgiveness and renewed friendship.

A statue of the purest gold was raised to the memory of Juliet by the Capulet family, whilst the same honour was vouchsafed to Romeo by the sorrowing Montagues; and all who gazed upon these monuments of affection shed tears of sympathy for the hapless fate of the faithful lovers:

For never was a story of more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo!



THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

THERE dwelt at Windsor during the reign of King Henry the Fourth a certain fat, jolly knight named Sir John Falstaff; and in all fair England there was not a merrier old fellow than he. Many were the tales told of his mad escapades in company with gay Prince Hal and his companion Poins; and many a round dozen of mischievous pranks and roguish tricks could be laid to the charge of the fat Knight of Windsor.

As may be readily guessed, one who led such a harum-scarum, careless life was not over-burdened with riches; but although Falstaff lived chiefly by his wits—and, be it admitted, occasionally by the depredations of his three rascally followers, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol—his portly form did not grow less for lack of goodly cheer, neither did his mighty thirst suffer for want of endless cups of sack.

Nevertheless, at one time, the gay old Knight found himself with a more than usually light purse; and appalled at the doleful prospect of restricted conviviality, he presently conceived the brilliant idea of providing himself with a couple of sweethearts, in order to replenish his fallen fortunes.

He therefore wrote two love-letters, word for word alike, save for the names of the individual charmers, and sent them to two comely house-wives of Windsor, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page; and since the husbands of these good dames were prosperous and of good standing, he hoped that his lovemaking would secure to him many substantial gifts, to say nothing of providing him with a pleasant way of passing his time, since both the ladies were still sufficiently young and well-favoured to prove attractive subjects for a flirtation. He made the letters as flattering and full of sentimental phrases as he could devise; and in each he finished thus:

Thine own true knight, By day or night, Or any kind of light, With all his might, For thee to fight,

John Falstaff.

When, however, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page received these amorous effusions, and, being friends and confidants, had compared notes and discovered the letters to be precisely the

same, they were at first very indignant that respectable dames should be thus addressed by such a well-known rake as Sir John Falstaff; but, soon guessing the reason for his sudden expression of affection, they set their quick wits to work to hatch a merry plan, whereby they should make the fat old Knight the laughingstock of the town, as a penalty for his audacity.

They therefore determined to make a pretence of encouraging his advances, in order that they might bring on him the anger of their husbands; and with this object in view, they sent a letter to Falstaff, inviting him to visit Mistress Ford at her house next day, informing him that her husband, who was of a very jealous disposition,

would then be safely out of the way.

Meanwhile, other little plots were also afoot in the two households. Mistress Page had a very pretty young daughter, charming Mistress Anne, who had at this time no less than three suitors for her hand. Her father desired her to wed a youth named Slender, who, though foolish, and a timid wooer, was rich; whilst her mother favoured a ridiculous and fussy old foreign admirer, one Doctor Caius. But pretty Mistress Anne herself had already fixed her choice upon a somewhat poor, but handsome young courtier named Fenton, whose sincere love for her she

had quickly returned with as deep an affection; and, in spite of the machinations of her father and mother, she was determined to wed none other than he. To her father's choice, she said:

O, what a world of vile ill-favour'd faults Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!

To her mother's choice, she said:

Good mother, do not marry me to yond' fool!

But to her own beloved Fenton, she said:

I am yours for evermore!

In the Ford household, too, another plot was brewing; for Master Ford, having heard from Falstaff's servant, Pistol (who had now conceived a spite against his fat master), that the reprobate Knight was carrying on a desperate flirtation with Mistress Ford, his jealousy was quickly roused, so that he set about making plans for exposing the pair.

When the amorous old Knight appeared at Mistress Ford's house at the appointed time, he was enthusiastically received by the lively dame, who pretended to accept his advances with every sign of favour; but very soon after his arrival, Mistress Page entered the room in haste, and with simulated fear announced that Master Ford was approaching in a great rage, accompanied by Master Page and a number of other

friends, all bent on dragging forth the lover whom they believed to be in the house.

Falstaff, in a great fright, eagerly begged for protection, having no desire to meet the jealous husband; and the two women quickly hid the timid Knight in a huge buck-basket-a receptacle for dirty clothes-which they had set ready for the purpose, stuffing his portly form in amongst the soiled linen. Then, covering him over with a cloth, they called two serving-men, to whom they gave instructions to carry the basket away to the meadow washing-ground, bidding them also in an undertone to tumble the contents into the river close by.

As the servants departed with the wash-basket, Ford entered, full of jealous fury, declaring that his wife had her lover hidden in the house; but after vainly searching for the ponderous Knight, he was greatly mystified, and determined to pay a visit to Falstaff in disguise, in order to learn his plans.

Meanwhile, the would-be lover had received a very unexpected ducking in the river; but though this unpleasant experience damped his ardour for the time being, he soon grew enthusiastic again next morning, as he sat with his boon companions in the Garter Inn, quaffing deep draughts of sack, and rejoicing over a second letter from Mistress Ford, in which she invited him to visit her again that day, as her husband would be out a-hawking.

Just as he finished singing a jovial song in praise of good wine, Master Ford entered in disguise; and introducing himself by the name of Brooks, asked Falstaff to help him in a love affair, declaring that he had fallen in love with the charming Mistress Ford, but was too timid to plead his own suit. He offered the Knight a fat purse for needful expenses; and Falstaff, nothing loth, accepted this unexpected windfall with great alacrity, boasting that he could easily arrange the matter, since he would be seeing Mistress Ford that day.

Ford then retired, having thus gained the information he needed; and Falstaff departed to keep his appointment with Mistress Ford, who again received him with pretended favour. Very soon, however, as again arranged between the two friends, Mistress Page interrupted the roguish old Knight's love-making by rushing into the room with the news that Master Ford was returning in a greater rage than ever, declaring that if he could catch his wife's lover this time he would certainly kill him.

These alarming words put Falstaff into a woeful trembling, and he sought wildly for a hiding-

place. This time, the two dames quickly hustled him into an upper chamber, bidding him don the clothes of a certain fat old fortune-telling woman of Brentford, whom they had invited for this very purpose.

Whilst Mistress Page hastily arrayed Sir John in the fortune-teller's gown, Mistress Ford endeavoured to persuade her irate husband not to search the house, as he wildly insisted upon doing; and she declared that no other stranger was there save the Fat Woman of Brentford, who happened to be visiting her that day.

This, as the wily dame expected, roused Ford's wrath still more, since he had a special dislike for the old fortune-telling hag, whom he had forbidden to enter his house again; and when Falstaff presently appeared in the Fat Woman's gown, he was roughly seized by the angry husband, and treated to a sound cudgelling ere he was permitted to depart.

Both the merry wives were by this time convulsed with laughter at the success of their plan; and they now told their husbands the whole truth of the matter, so that Ford's jealousy quickly vanished, and he sought pardon from his wife for his doubt of her.

After peace had been thus happily restored, the friends decided to carry the joke a little further still, and to give Falstaff a third scare, as a final penalty for his many misdeeds; and it was arranged that they should lure him to Windsor Forest at midnight, and there lead him to suppose that he was being attacked by fairies, gob-

lins, and other supernatural beings.

Mistress Ford therefore invited her ponderous admirer to meet her in the forest at midnight, promising to lend him a pair of stag's horns for his head, that he might disguise himself as Herne the Hunter, in which garb, if any of the townsfolk should chance to see him, they would quickly run away in terror, looking upon him as a spirit; for at that time there were plenty of superstitious folk to be found who believed in the legend Herne the Hunter, which was as follows: an age gone by, a certain famous hunter named Herne had impiously slain a stag beneath the sacred oak tree, which was always regarded as a place of refuge to hunted creatures; and for this misdeed his spirit was condemned to wear the stag's horns and to hunt in the forest at midnight for evermore, accompanied by a phantom train of fellow hunters and dogs.

It was arranged that pretty Mistress Anne should appear in the forest arrayed as the Fairy Queen, accompanied by a troop of children disguised as elves and gnomes; and Page, Ford, Slender, Doctor Caius, and Fenton would also appear as various other unearthly beings to assist in the teasing and tormenting of Falstaff.

Master Page and his wife, unknown to each other, also determined to use this masquerade as a means for carrying out their opposing wishes with regard to their daughter's marriage. So Anne was first secretly commanded by her father to wear a red gown, that she might thus be recognised by Slender, who meant to run away with her, that they might be married that night by the priest at Eton; and soon afterwards she was stealthily desired by her mother to don a green robe, that she might be noted by Doctor Caius, with whom the crafty dame had arranged a similar elopement.

But merry Mistress Anne herself decided to wear bridal white garments, arranging with her beloved Fenton that he would know her thus, and could slip away with her to the priest at Eton before the other suitors could find her; and in order to complete the confusion, she directed Slender to wear a green robe and Doctor Caius a red one in the masquerade, that they might thus run away with each other in mistake for herself.

On the appointed evening, Falstaff, disguised as Herne the Hunter, appeared under the

Sacred Oak in Windsor Forest at midnight; and very soon after, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page appeared also. The two merry dames, enjoying the joke immensely, encouraged the fat Knight in his extravagant and absurd love-making; but, presently, hearing weird noises, and seeing strange forms approaching, they pretended to be terrified, and fled away shrieking, leaving the frightened Falstaff sprawling on the ground, for, in attempting to run away also, he had tripped and fallen.

The prostrate Knight was instantly surrounded by the band of pretended fairies, gnomes, and sprites; and pretty Mistress Anne, attired in a flowing white robe as Titania, drew

near, and sang:

Fairies, black, grey, green, and white, You moonshine revellers, and shades of night, You orphan heirs of fixed destiny, Attend your office and your quality. About, about: Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out: Strew good luck, ouphes, on every sacred room! That it may stand till the perpetual doom, In state as wholesome, as in state 'tis fit Worthy the owner, and the owner it. The several chairs of order look you scour With juice of balm, and every precious flower: Each fair instalment, coat, and sev'ral crest, With loyal blazon evermore be bless'd! And nightly, meadow fairies, look, you sing, Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring:

Th' expressure that it bears, green let it be, More fertile-fresh than all the field to see; And Honi soit qui mal y pense, write, In emrold tuffs, flowers purple, blue, and white: Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery, Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee: Fairies use flowers for their charactery. Away; disperse: But till 'tis one o'clock, Our dance of custom, round about the oak Of Herne the Hunter, let us not forget!

As Falstaff listened to these words, he was filled with alarm, believing that he was indeed surrounded by supernatural beings; and sharing the common superstitious notion that it was death to look upon or speak to the fairies, he buried his face in his hands, and lay still upon the ground, hoping they would presently vanish.

But the supposed Fairy Queen now sang out a

further command:

About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme; And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time! Pinch him, fairies, mutually, Pinch him for his villany;

Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about, Till candles, and starlight, and moonshine be out!

At this command, her lively followers all set upon Falstaff, pinching him, and pricking him with their toy darts, uttering strange wild cries, and indulging in loud peals of eldritch laughter; and the tormented Knight, not daring to stir, and fearing he knew not what, soon began to bellow for mercy. Whilst this ludicrous scene was progressing, Fenton, in the guise of Oberon, drew near to Anne, whom he recognised by her white gown, and taking her by the hand, hurried away with her to Eton, where the priest they had notified quickly married them; and Slender and Doctor Caius, the one in green and the other in red, also joined hands, and slipped away together, each believing the other to be Mistress Anne, in accordance with the directions given them by the supporters of their suits.

When the merry wives were fully satisfied that their corpulent and audacious admirer had received a sufficiently severe pinching, and thorough scare to teach him not to make love to respectable married dames again, they set him free, and revealed the true identity of the weird company of tormentors; and when all had enjoyed a hearty laugh at the old reprobate's expense, in which the jolly Falstaff, bearing no malice, readily joined, the masquerade came to an end.

Then, to the amazement of Master Page and his wife, Slender and Doctor Caius both appeared, full of blustering wrath at the trick which had been played upon them by saucy Mistress Anne, and which they had not discovered until they had reached Eton; and whilst the

disappointed suitors were bewailing their loss, the two arch-plotters, Fenton and Anne, arrived also on the scene, and confessing their successful ruse, sued for pardon.

This was readily granted by the parents, who good-humouredly admitted that they had been out-witted by these determined lovers; and Page remarked:

Well, what remedy? Fenton, heaven give thee joy! What cannot be eschew'd must be embrac'd!

And Falstaff merrily added:

When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased! But Ford said:

In love, the heavens themselves do guide the state; Money buys land, and wives are sold by fate!

After this, the whole party trooped back to Master Page's house, to enjoy a wedding feast; and in deep draughts of his favourite beverage, Falstaff quickly drowned all remembrance of the teasing he had received at the hands of the Merry Wives of Windsor.



SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE COMPOSERS.

BENEDICT.

SIR JULIUS BENEDICT was born at Stuttgart, Nov. 27th, 1804; died June 5th, 1885. In his early years he studied with J. C. L. Abeille, and was also under Hummel at Weimar, where he was presented to Weber, who then took him entirely under his charge, treating him more as a son than as a pupil. At the age of nineteen years, he was appointed conductor of the Karnthnerthor Theatre in Vienna. From there he went to Italy, and was appointed Chef d'Orchestre at the San Carlos at Naples. Here he produced his first opera, Giacinta ed Ernesto (1829). In 1835, he went to England, which country he made his home for the remainder of his life. Here his finest operas were written and produced, The Brides of Venice being produced in 1843, and The Crusaders, 1846; and in 1836 he was made musical director of the Opera Buffa at the Lyceum Theatre. In 1850, he accompanied Jenny Lind to the United States, as director of her concerts. On his return in 1852, he was appointed conductor of the Harmonic Union.

In 1862 he produced his popular opera, The Lily of Killarney, a musical version of Dion Boucicault's play, The Colleen Bawn. In 1871 he was knighted; and he died in England on June 5th, 1885. Besides his operas, Benedict also wrote some very charming cantatas, chief of which are Undine (1860) and Richard Cœur de Lion (1863); also Graziella (1882), afterwards performed as an opera. He also wrote the oratorios, St. Cecilia (1866) and St. Peter (1870); and a number of other smaller musical pieces.

DONIZETTI.

GAETANO DONIZETTI was born at Bergamo, Italy, September 25th, 1798; died there April 8th, 1848. His musical education was conducted at Bologna and Naples; and at first, at his father's wish, he devoted himself to church music, for which, however, he had no taste, and to evade which he entered the army. Whilst thus away from home, he wrote his first two operas, Enrico di Borgogna and Il Falegname de Livonia, the latter of which was so successful that he left the army and devoted himself entirely to opera-writing. He wrote with great rapidity and ease, and produced no less than sixty operas. His style was founded on that of Rossini, and his flowing melodies have attained great popularity. After 1844, Donizetti's talent seemed to have utterly exhausted itself, and he began to suffer from melancholia, which finally developed into insanity. Donizetti's chief operas were: The Daughter of the Regiment (1840), La Favorita (1840), Don Pasquale (1843), Lucia di Lammermoor (1835), L'Eliser d'Amore (1832), Lucrezia Borgia (1834), Linda de Chamouni (1842), etc.

VERDI.

GUISEPPE VERDI was born at Rancola, in the Duchy of Parma, Italy, 10th October, 1813; died at Busseto, in January, 1901. He received his musical education at Busseto and Milan. He was appointed organist at Rancola at the age of ten years; and when but twenty years old he became Director of the Philharmonic Society at Busseto. He settled in Milan in 1838, and there his first opera, Oberto di San Bonifazio, was produced at La Scala in 1839. The opera that first brought him European fame was Ernani (1844). Rigoletto was produced in 1851, and Il Trovatore in 1853; and these two operas, through all changes of taste and style, still continue to hold their own in popular favour. He wrote many other operas, the best known of which are: La Traviata (1853), Aida (1871), Otello (1877), Macbeth (1847), Falstaff (1893), I Lombardi (1843), Un Ballo in Maschera (1859), Simon Boccanegra (1857), Les Vespres Siciliennes (1855), etc. His other works include a Requiem Mass (1847), and other sacred compositions, etc.

ROSSINI.

GIOACCHINI ANTONIO ROSSINI was born at Pesaro, in Italy, February 29th, 1792, of very humble parents, his father being the town trumpeter. As a child, he showed such great aptitude for music that, in spite of the troubles and poverty of his parents, an excellent teacher was found for him in Tesei. He was taught to sing the solos in church, and at the age of thirteen years he was given an appointment as a singer at the theatre. In 1806 he entered the Conservatoire, at Bologna, under Mattei; and here his progress was so rapid that he took a prize for a cantata after his first year. In 1810 he began to write operas, of which he produced no less than fifty within twenty-six years. He went to London in 1823, and sang in a series of concerts. He then went to Paris, where he remained until his death. He wrote nothing further after 1836; and having at that early period of his career gained great fame and wealth, he devoted the remainder of his life to luxurious living. Rossini's florid, but melodious, style of operatic composition remained the standard model for Italian opera for a great number of years. His most celebrated operas were: Tancredi (1813), The Barber of Seville (1815), Semiramide (1823), and William Tell (1829). He also wrote the famous oratorio, Moses in Egypt, which has also been performed

as an opera; and in 1842 his Stabat Mater was produced. He died 13th November, 1868.

WALLACE.

WILLIAM VINCENT WALLACE was born at Waterford, Ireland, 1st July, 1814; died at the Chateau of Baven, in the Haute-Garonne, France, 12th October, 1865. His father, a bandmaster, gave him his first instructions; and at an early age he could play most military instruments, besides being very proficient on the violin. At the age of fifteen he became Director of the Philharmonic Society in Dublin. 1835 he set forth on a professional tour through Australia, New Zealand, India, South America, and the United States, meeting with enormous success as composer and performer. He was Director of Music at the Italian Theatre, Mexico, 1841-42. In 1845 Maritana was produced in London, and shares with Balfe's Bohemian Girl the highest popularity of any lyrical drama. Other well-known operas of Wallace's are: Lurline (1860), The Amber Witch (1861), Matilda of Hungary (1847), The Desert Flower (1863), etc.

BELLINI.

VINCENZO BELLINI was born in Catania, in Sicily, November 3rd, 1802; died at Puteaux, near Paris, September 24th, 1835. He studied

at the Conservatorium in Naples, and in 1833 went to Paris. He produced a number of operas, his style being chiefly founded on that of the then fashionable Rossini, but with the defects of that composer's florid work somewhat exaggerated. Rossini was, however, a good friend to the young Bellini, and gave him very valuable assistance and encouragement. Bellini's best known and most attractive operas are La Sonnambula (La Scala, 1831), Norma (December 26th, 1831), and I Puritani (1835); all of which are full of melodious airs, and have attained great popularity.

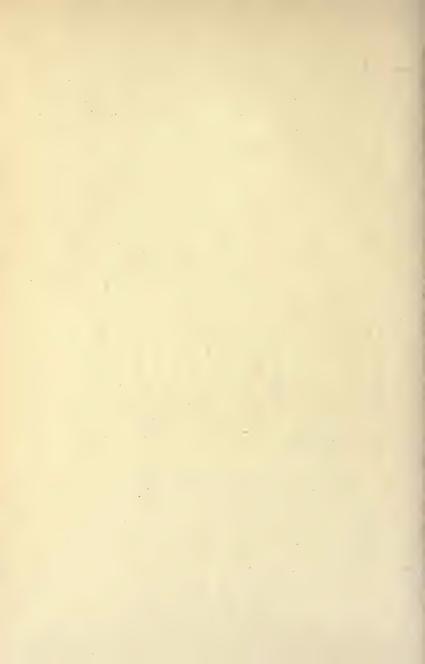
GOUNOD.

CHARLES FRANÇOIS GOUNOD was born at Paris, 17th June, 1818; died there 18th October, 1893. He entered the Conservatoire in 1836, and took the Grand Prix de Rome in 1839. In Rome he was appointed Honorary Maestre di Capella for life. After several years of study, he produced his Messe Solonelle in G, some portions of which were brought out in London in 1851. He held in Paris, from 1852-60, the post of Conductor of the Orphèon. He wrote operas from 1851. Faust was produced at the Thèatre Lyrique in 1859, and placed him at once in the front rank of his profession. Amongst his other best known operas are: Romèo et Juliette (1867), Sapho (1851), Philemon et Baucis (1860), Cinq-Mars (1877), etc. In 1882 he

produced an oratorio, The Redemption, at the Birmingham Musical Festival; and he also wrote much church music.

NICOLAI.

CARL OTTO EHRENFRIED NICOLAI was born at Konigsberg, June 9th, 1810; died at Berlin, May 11th, 1849. He had an unhappy home life, but found a good friend in Justizrath Adler, of Stargard, who sent him to Berlin to study music. In 1833 he went to Rome as Organist to the Prussian Embassy Chapel, where he studied both the old and the modern masters. In 1841 he became Court Capellmeister at Vienna, where in 1842 he established the Philharmonic Society. In 1844 he became Director of the Domcher and Court Capellmeister of the Opera in Berlin. His chief operas were: The Templar (1840), Il Proscritto (1841), and The Merry Wives of Windsor (1849). The latter met with a brilliant success, which, however, the composer did not long live to enjoy, as he died two months after its first production.



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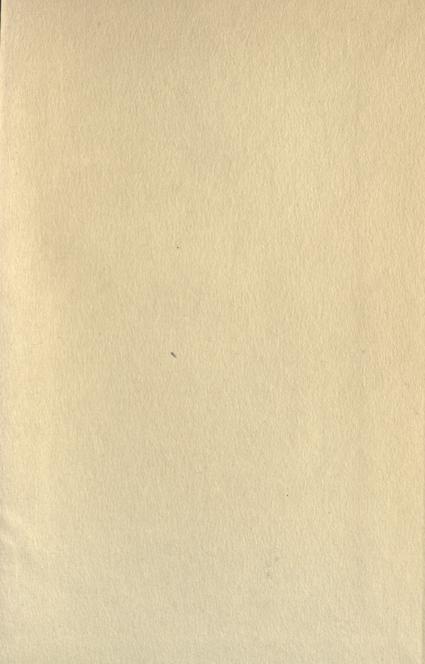
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